



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**The Study of Tourist Attractions in the 5 Provinces of Upper Part of Northeastern, Thailand to be Sustainable Tourism Development**

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**ABSTRACT**

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This research aimed to examine the diversity and variety of tourist attractions in five provinces of northeastern Thailand. The study sought to predict future visitor numbers - comprising excursionists, tourists, and other visitors - based on historical statistical averages. Additionally, the research aimed to develop strategies for managing potential overcrowding and promoting sustainable tourism in the region. Data collection involved interviews with stakeholders, including government officials, representatives from private organizations, and local residents, as well as focus group discussions. The findings indicate a significant diversity of tourist attractions across the five provinces. Projections suggest a gradual increase in visitor numbers, determined by historical growth trends. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of promoting cultural, creative, and Agro-tourism initiatives, tailored to the unique characteristics of each province, to ensure sustainable tourism development in the future.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The upper part of northeastern Thailand divided by Phupan mountain range from the lower part; there are 11 provinces, however, this research specified 5 provinces: Buengkan, Loei, Nongbualamphu, Nongkhai, and Udonthani )Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2009(. There is an upper plateau and Sakhonnakorn basin in the area, Loei Mountain with average of 1,000 meters above sea level is the origin of 2 rivers: Loei and Songkram rivers flow to Mun and Panieng rivers then merge to Khong River. )Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022( In 5 provinces, there are many tourist attractions which can be categorized to be 3 types: natural tourist attractions, man-made tourist attractions and customs and festivals.

**Table 1 Five provinces in the upper part of northeastern Thailand and tourist attractions located in the provinces**

Provinces	Natural Attractions	Tourist	Man-made Tourist Attractions	Customs and Festivals
Buengkan )TAT, 2009(	Caves: Naga Cave Waterfalls: Jet Si, Phu Thamphra Lakes: Bung Khong Long, Nong Kut Ting		Temples: Photaram temple, Chetiya Khiri Viharn Chaomae Songnang Shrine Thai-Laos Flea Market	Rocket Festival, Songkran, Candles parade, Boat racing, Light boat parade

	Mountains: Phu tok Noi, Phu Sing		
Loei )TAT, 2009(	Kaeng Kutku, Kaeng Ton Phuluang Wild Animal Reserve View Points: Decho, etc. Caves: Pha Pung, Pha Ya etc. Waterfalls: Khun Pong, Chang Tok etc. National Parks: Phu Kadung, Phu Rua	Temples: Si Song Rak, Satcha, Museums: Local Museum Buddha Image Lord Buddha Foot Print City Pillar Shrine Archaeological Sites: Mahoran Cave, Laitang Cave	Red Cross Fair Si Song Rak Praying Fair Phi Ta Khon Winter Flowers Fair
Nongkhai )TAT, 2009(	Phu Wua Wild Animals Reserve View Points: Tam Prai etc. Waterfalls: Jet Si, Tarn Tong etc. River Beaches: Chom Manee, Sita etc.	Phra Dhat Bang Puan, Phra Dhat Klang Nam Nongkhai Museum Temples: Tam Sri Mongkol, Phochai etc. Buddha images Monument Tha Sadet Market Aquarium Symbol Shrine wicker ware Village Freshwater Fisherman Village Public Parks	Boat Racing The Celebration of the Victory over the Hor Rebellion Red Cross Fair Rocket Festival Songkran Festival
Nongbualamphu )TAT, 2009(	Hor Sawan View Point Caves: Pha Cho, Pha Wieng etc. Waterfalls Tao To Forest Park Phu Kao-Phu Pankam National Park	Naresuan, the Great Monument Temples: Tam Kong Pen etc. City Pillar Shrine Archaeological Sites 150 million years Stone Shell Museum Reservoirs	Vist Hoi Hin and Longan Fair Luang Pu Kao Praying Fair
Udonthani )TAT, 2009(	Kum Chanod View Points Waterfalls Forest Park Na Yung-Nam Som National Park	Phra Dhat Don Kaew Lord Buddha Foot Print Monument Ban Chiang Museum Temples Ban Chiang Thai Puan Udon Sunshine Orchid Farm Ban Men Handicraft Center Na Kha Village	Food Street Fair Rocket Festival Songkran Festival Tung Sri Muang Annual Fair Bang Chiang World Heritage Fair

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand

In table 1 illustrated that in 5 each province of the northeast, Thailand; there were diversity and variety of tourist attractions: natural, man-made and customs and festivals. There were many tourists both Thai citizens and foreigners visit the tourist attractions which were pull factors drawn attentions to the tourists to come and distribute their money to boost the economic in the area.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism plays a pivotal role in economic development, particularly in regions rich in cultural and natural resources. The northeastern provinces of Thailand, often less highlighted in tourism literature, present a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of tourist attractions and their impact on local communities

and sustainability. This literature review synthesizes key findings related to diversity in tourist attractions, projections of visitor numbers, and sustainable tourism development based on recent research focused on five northeastern provinces in Thailand.

**Diversity and Variety of Tourist Attractions:** Researcher emphasizes the importance of diverse tourist attractions as a means to enhance visitor experiences and extend the duration of stays. In the context of the five northeastern provinces of Thailand, the study identified a rich variety of attractions, ranging from cultural heritage sites to natural landscapes and agro-tourism initiatives. This aligns with the findings of other scholars who highlight that diversity not only attracts a broader audience but also fosters cultural exchange and local engagement (Patterson & Pan, 2018).

**Visitor Projections and Statistical Analysis:** The study employed statistical methods to project future visitor numbers, building on historical data trends. Similar methodologies have been utilized in tourism studies to anticipate demand and inform resource allocation (Khan et al., 2020). The findings indicated a gradual increase in the number of excursionists, tourists, and visitors, suggesting that targeted strategies could be developed to manage this growth sustainably.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging local stakeholders—government representatives, private organizations, and community members—was a crucial aspect of this research. The literature supports this approach, noting that stakeholder involvement is essential for effective tourism planning and management (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). This collaborative framework not only ensures that diverse perspectives are considered but also enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of tourism initiatives within local communities.

**Sustainability in Tourism Development:** Sustainable tourism has emerged as a critical focus in the industry, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. The study advocates for the promotion of cultural, creative, and agro-tourism as pathways to sustainability, resonating with broader trends in tourism literature that underscore the importance of integrating sustainable practices into tourism development (González et al., 2018).

The examination of tourist attractions in the northeastern provinces of Thailand offers valuable insights into the potential for sustainable tourism development. By understanding the diversity of attractions, engaging stakeholders, and planning for future visitor increases, regions can better prepare for the challenges of overcrowding and resource management. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, particularly in how they relate to the preservation of local cultures and environments in the face of growing tourism demands.

A SWOT analysis is utilized to evaluate various aspects of a business by examining its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Jackson et al., 2003; Kim, 2005). This framework recognizes the critical internal and external factors that influence the achievement of a business's objectives. Internal factors pertain to elements within the organization's control, while external factors involve elements beyond its control (Bull et al., 2016; David et al., 2017; Hill & Westbrook, 1997; Lee & Ko, 2000; Shariatmadari et al., 2013).

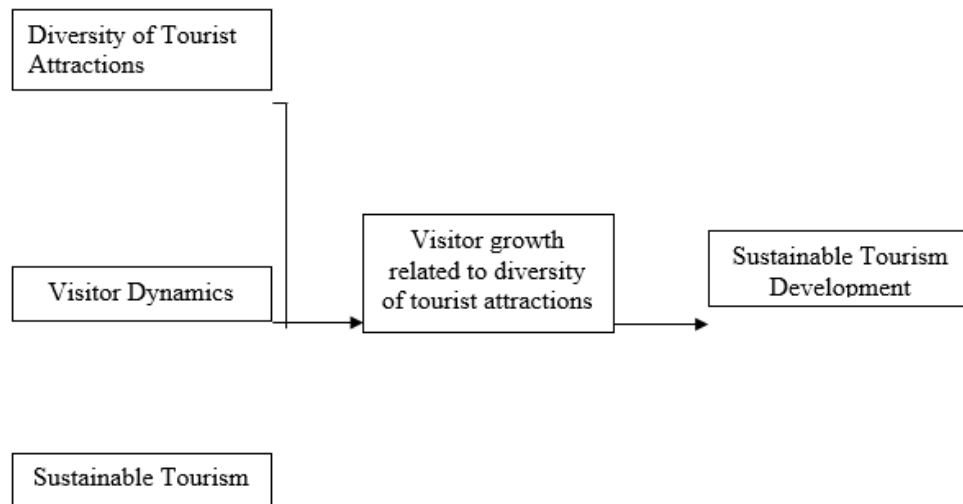
By integrating the analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, SWOT analysis can effectively generate alternative strategic options for a business (Lee & Ko, 2000; Valentin, 2001; Wang, 2007; Weihrich, 1982). This method clarifies how strengths and weaknesses can be aligned with opportunities and threats. Based on these internal and external factors, managers can formulate four types of strategies: SO (strengths-opportunities), ST (strengths-threats), WO (weaknesses-opportunities), and WT (weaknesses-threats) (Bayram & Üçüncü, 2016; David et al., 2019; Povilanskas & Labuz, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014; Usman & Murakami, 2011). Additionally, tools such as the External Factors Evaluation (EFE) matrix, the Internal Factors Evaluation (IFE) matrix, and the Competitive Profile Matrix (CPM) can be employed to construct the SWOT matrix (Davis, 2007).

The SWOT matrix can be succinctly summarized as follows: SO Strategies: Leveraging strengths to capitalize on opportunities. ST Strategies: Utilizing strengths to mitigate threats. WO Strategies: Transforming weaknesses into new opportunities. WT Strategies: Reducing weaknesses to avoid threats.

SWOT analysis serves as a valuable tool during the evaluation phase, providing an initial insight into potential future outcomes. It is a straightforward analytical method that offers a realistic assessment of a business's strengths and weaknesses while facilitating an understanding of the discrepancies between the current state and future plans, as well as analyzing the competitive landscape (Armstrong, 1982; Robinson & Pearce, 1988). Moreover, SWOT analysis is widely recognized for its user-friendliness and does not necessitate the use of specialized computer systems or software (Beeho & Prentice, 1997).

## Objectives

- 1) To examine diversity and variety of tourist attractions in 5 provinces of the upper part of northeast, Thailand
- 2) To predict future visitor numbers - comprising excursionists, tourists, and other visitors - based on historical statistical averages
- 3) To develop strategies for managing potential overcrowding and promoting sustainable tourism in the region



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing interviews with three main groups of key informants: 100 representatives from government organizations, 100 from private organizations, and 300 local residents. The selection of key informants was conducted through purposive sampling. The groups included: 1) Government Organizations: individuals from local government entities, including high-ranking officials or authorized representatives with decision-making authority, as well as interested academics, local planners, and local politicians; 2) Private Organizations: representatives from the private sector and entrepreneurs, including workers who may be positively or negatively affected by tourism initiatives, as well as individuals involved in planning and budgeting processes; and 3) Local Residents: community leaders, influencers, and local individuals residing in the area. Secondary data were sourced from textbooks,

websites, and statistical databases. Data from both primary and secondary sources were systematically classified and categorized. Focus group discussions were subsequently conducted in Buengkan, Loei, Nongbualamphu, Nongkhai, and Udonthani provinces, involving a total of 139 government organizations, 145 private organizations, and 370 local residents to gather their insights. The final data were synthesized to inform the development of tourist attractions across the five provinces, ultimately contributing to sustainability efforts. A SWOT analysis and TOWS matrix were conducted to finalize the conclusions.

## RESULTS

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Buengkan, Loei, Nongbualamphu, Nongkhai, and Udonthani experienced a significant influx of excursionists, tourists, and visitors, both domestic and international. The revenue generated from tourism in these provinces steadily increased each year from 2014 to 2018, as illustrated in Table 2-6 (Department of Tourism, 2020).

**Table 2 Number of excursionists, tourists and visitors and revenue of Buengkan Province from 2014-2018**

Province	Excursionists, tourists, and visitors/revenue	Statistic number of tourists and revenues 2014-2018				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Buengkan	No. of Thai visitors	530,921	560,393	575,123	596,216	599,471
	No. of foreign visitors	6,206	6,360	6,541	6,756	6,723
	No. Thai tourists	314,527	331,270	335,505	347,340	348,345
	No. of foreign tourists	2,797	2,858	2,864	2,945	2,949
	No. of Thai excursionists	216,394	229,123	239,618	248,876	251,126
	No. of foreign excursionists	3,409	3,502	3,677	3,811	3,774
	Revenue )million Baht( Thai	828.18	906.03	964.40	1,041.11	1,057.09
	Revenue )million Baht( Foreign	10.77	11.39	12.21	13.20	13.27

Source: Department of Tourism

**Table 3 Number of excursionists, tourists and visitors and revenue of Loei Province from 2014-2018**

Province	Excursionists, tourists, and visitors/revenue	Statistic number of tourists and revenues 2014-2018				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Loei	No. of Thai visitors	1,548,723	1,897,358	1,993,768	2,092,365	2,192,198
	No. of foreign visitors	33,228	35,764	37,354	39,160	40,932
	No. Thai tourists	860,108	1,066,972	1,123,644	1,188,934	1,250,676
	No. of foreign tourists	19,562	20,976	21,802	22,660	23,698
	No. of Thai excursionists	688,615	830,386	870,124	903,431	941,522
	No. of foreign excursionists	13,666	14,788	15,552	16,500	17,234
	Revenue )million Baht( Thai	2,591.08	3,251.09	3,606.95	4,036.69	4,480.75
	Revenue )million Baht( foreign	84.39	96.05	104.73	115.90	129.39

Source: Department of Tourism

**Table 4 Number of excursionists, tourists and visitors and revenue of Nongbualamphu Province from 2014-2018**

Province	Excursionists, tourists, and visitors/revenue	Statistic number of tourists and revenues 2014-2018				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nongbualamphu	No. of Thai excursionists	164,791	171,541	175,436	188,097	194,467
	No. of foreign excursionists	999	1,119	1,134	1,308	1,346
	No. Thai tourists	162,858	170,938	172,129	186,172	189,355
	No. of foreign tourists	395	444	437	489	503
	No. of Thai visitors	327,649	342,479	347,565	374,269	383,510
	No. of foreign visitors	1,394	1,563	1,571	1,797	1,849
	Revenue )million Baht( Thai	311.73	334.89	348.55	393.26	416.04
	Revenue )million Baht( foreign	1.52	1.76	1.80	2.11	2.25

Source: Department of Tourism

**Table 5 Number of excursionists, tourists and visitors and revenue of Nongkhai Province from 2014-2018**

Province	Excursionists, tourists, and visitors/revenue	Statistic number of tourists and revenues 2014-2018				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nongkhai	No. of Thai excursionists	733,559	781,028	815,749	851,054	883,366
	No. of foreign excursionists	470,315	494,842	511,586	540,129	505,343
	No. Thai tourists	1,107,958	1,190,967	1,229,558	1,221,717	1,259,517
	No. of foreign tourists	48,569	50,508	51,607	51,392	52,965
	No. of Thai visitors	1,841,582	1,971,995	2,045,307	2,072,771	2,142,883
	No. of foreign visitors	526,981	545,350	563,193	591,521	618,308
	Revenue )million Baht( Thai	3,549.56	3,847.62	4,120.92	4,381.48	4,792.50
	Revenue )million Baht( foreign	627.24	660.07	704.66	771.36	846.11

Source: Department of Tourism

**Table 6 Number of excursionists, tourists and visitors and revenue of Udonthani Province from 2014-2018**

Provinces	Excursionists, tourists, and visitors/revenue	Statistic number of tourists and revenues 2014-2018				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Udonthani	No. of Thai excursionists	885,915	941,478	969,284	1,038,822	1,089,206
	No. of foreign excursionists	62,233	63,366	64,795	70,452	72,187

	No. Thai tourists	2,050,234	2,163,506	2,192,374	2,386,673	2,471,554
	No. of foreign tourists	75,505	77,158	77,948	85,340	87,510
	No. of Thai visitors	2,936,149	3,104,984	3,161,658	3,425,495	3,560,760
	No. of foreign visitors	137,738	140,524	142,743	155,801	159,697
	Revenue )million Baht( Thai	6,986.10	7,594.76	8,047.61	9,306.15	10,205.18
	Revenue )million Baht( foreign	467.27	489.94	510.80	586.36	636.06

Source: Department of Tourism

As of 2022, approximately 3 million tourists visited the region, generating revenue of 6 billion Baht. These visitors were accommodated in 23 large, standardized hotels and utilized various modes of transportation, including air, rail, and road travel. The interconnection of five provinces, along with access to Laos, has been evaluated through the framework of the 6As: accessibilities, attractions, activities, accommodations, amenities, and ancillary services. These components are essential for enhancing tourist influx and increasing regional income.

In 2023, there was a notable resurgence in tourist arrivals, and projections indicate a continuing rise in the number of excursionists, tourists, and visitors in the future. Consequently, the researcher aims to investigate the sustainable development of tourist attractions in the area to ensure long-term viability and economic benefit.

According to statistical analyses, the increasing ratio of excursionists, tourists, and visitors indicates a gradual growth trend in the region's tourism sector. Specifically, in Udonthani Province, there are approximately 2.2 million excursionists, 2.68 million tourists, and 3.9 million visitors, generating revenue of 11.31 billion Baht. Nongkhai Province records 1.48 million excursionists, 1.35 million tourists, and 2.86 million visitors, contributing 5.88 billion Baht in revenue. Loei Province is projected to host 1.0 million excursionists, 1.35 million tourists, and 2.49 million visitors, with an estimated revenue of 4.9 billion Baht. In Buengkan Province, the figures stand at 0.26 million excursionists, 1.52 million tourists, and 0.62 million visitors, yielding 1.11 billion Baht in revenue. Lastly, Nongbualamphu Province is expected to have 0.2 million excursionists, 0.19 million tourists, and 0.39 million visitors, generating 427 million Baht. Notably, Udonthani, Nongkhai, and Loei provinces are particularly focused on promoting sustainability within their tourism development strategies.

Interviews were conducted with three main groups of key informants: 100 representatives from government organizations, 100 from private organizations, and 300 local residents. The selection of key informants was carried out through purposive sampling based on specific criteria. In Buengkan Province, the focus is on promoting river and canal tourism while supporting sustainable tourism and cultural creative initiatives. Loei Province emphasizes the value of cultural customs associated with waterways and also advocates for sustainable and cultural creative tourism. Nongbualamphu Province is dedicated to the promotion of cultural and creative tourism, while Nongkhai focuses on enhancing tourism related to canals and rivers. Lastly, Udonthani Province aims to create value from cultural practices linked to water and supports both sustainable and cultural creative tourism efforts.

**Table 7 The results of interview governments organizations, private organizations and local residents**

No.	Key informants	Results
1	100 government organizations 100 private organizations	Buengkan Province: the focus is on promoting river and canal tourism while supporting sustainable tourism and cultural creative initiatives

	300 local residents	Loei Province: emphasizes the value of cultural customs associated with waterways and also advocates for sustainable and cultural creative tourism Nongbualamphu Province: dedicated to the promotion of cultural and creative tourism Nongkhai Province: focuses on enhancing tourism related to canals and rivers Udonthani Province: create value from cultural practices linked to water and supports both sustainable and cultural creative tourism efforts
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Focus group discussions were conducted to gather data from stakeholders selected from various sectors in different provinces. In Buengkan Province, data were collected from 15 government organizations, 20 private organizations, and 60 local residents. Loei Province provided input from 25 government organizations, 18 private organizations, and 55 local residents. In Nongbualamphu Province, the focus group included 8 government organizations, 10 private organizations, and 30 local residents. Nongkhai Province contributed insights from 18 government organizations, 22 private organizations, and 50 local residents. Finally, Udonthani Province had 73 government organizations, 75 private organizations, and 175 local residents participating in the discussions. This diverse representation facilitated the collection of a wide range of opinions on the relevant issues.

**Table 8 Focus group of organizations, private organizations and local residents result**

No.	Place	Attendants	Results
1	Buengkan Province	15 government organizations 20 private organizations 60 local residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create value of culture and customs related to water such as travel in rivers or canals, support conservative tourism, cultural creative tourism etc.</li> <li>- Continue and promote culture and customs in the area</li> <li>- Follow the Khong River Civilization Path</li> <li>- Develop tourism in all dimensions: ecological, cultural, and the Khong River Civilization tourism</li> </ul>
2	Loei Province	25 government organizations 18 private organizations 55 local residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create value of culture and customs related to water such as travel in rivers or canals, support conservative tourism, cultural creative tourism etc.</li> <li>- Continue and promote culture and customs in the area</li> </ul>
3	Nongbualamphu	8 government organizations 10 private organizations 30 local residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote Tourism Attractions to be Standard</li> <li>- Emphasize on Public-relations to the tourists</li> </ul>
4	Nongkhai	18 government organizations 22 private organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Canals, River Tourism City</li> <li>- Connects to Laos, the neighboring country</li> </ul>



		50 local residents	
5	Udonthani Province	73 government organizations 75 private organization 175 local residents	- Create value of culture and customs related to water such as travel in rivers or canals, support conservative tourism, cultural creative tourism etc. - Promote MICE Tourism to be MICE center

## SWOT Analysis and TOWS Matrix for the Five Provinces

### 1. Strengths

- The region boasts numerous outstanding natural attractions, including waterfalls, the Mekong River, national parks, and UNESCO World Heritage sites. Additionally, there is a variety of temples and sacred places that appeal to pilgrims, as well as eco-tourism, religious, and cultural attractions.
- Each of the five provinces offers suitable living environments for the elderly.
- Multiple modes of transportation facilitate access to the provinces, with Udon thani serving as a central hub for travel and easy access to neighboring countries.
- There is a rich array of local foods and merchandise available in the area.
- The northeastern region is characterized by a diverse range of customs and traditions.
- Local residents are known for their friendliness and hospitality, providing a warm welcome to visitors.
- A variety of activities are available for tourists, including trekking, hiking, cruising, outdoor activities, and biking.

### 2. Weaknesses

- Certain tourist attractions in Bueng Kan Province remain relatively unknown to visitors.
- Some provinces lack standardized accommodations and the necessary specialists and personnel in the tourism sector.
- There is no strategic plan for tourism development; government entities, private organizations, and local residents often lack knowledge of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), foreign language skills, and international service standards.
- Insufficient amenities are present in certain areas.
- Issues with cleanliness and waste management persist in some locations.

### 3. Opportunities

- Increasing interest among tourists in natural and cultural experiences suggests that new activities should be developed to meet these demands.
- Health tourism and gastronomy tourism present promising avenues for promotion.

- Emphasizing cooperation among communities and sustainable organizations could enhance tourism efforts.
- The use of social media and technology should be leveraged for broader public relations outreach.

#### **4. Threats**

- Some areas in Thailand are more well-known and popular among tourists, which may detract from the appeal of the five provinces.
- Climate change poses a significant threat to the environment and tourist attractions.
- Insufficient funding and support hinder infrastructure improvement.
- Tourist attractions within the same province may be located at considerable distances from one another.
- In some provinces, the number of accommodations is inadequate to meet the needs of tourists.

The TOWS Matrix serves as a strategic framework that aligns internal strengths and weaknesses with external opportunities and threats in the context of tourism development. This framework enables researchers to devise strategies that capitalize on the strengths of the region while addressing its weaknesses, thereby fostering sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

#### **Strengths-Opportunities (SO) Strategy**

The SO strategy emphasizes leveraging the region's strengths to exploit available opportunities. Key initiatives include promoting tourist attractions across five provinces, focusing on diverse offerings such as natural sites, eco-tourism, religious and cultural landmarks, gastronomy, and health tourism. Udonthani Province is positioned as a central hub for tourism, facilitating the coordination of various activities such as trekking, hiking, cruising, and biking. The strategy also underscores the importance of collaboration between local communities and sustainable organizations to enhance the tourism experience. Furthermore, the effective use of social media and technology is crucial for broadening public outreach and engagement.

#### **Weaknesses-Opportunities (WO) Strategy**

The WO strategy seeks to address the region's weaknesses by capitalizing on existing opportunities. This involves the enhancement of strategic planning aimed at regional development, coupled with training programs for local residents to improve their skills and knowledge in the tourism sector. Support for private organizations in establishing internationally recognized accommodations is essential. Additionally, efforts must be directed towards addressing cleanliness and waste management issues in certain areas, which are vital for attracting tourists. The continued integration of social media and technology will further aid in expanding public relations efforts.

#### **Strengths-Threats (ST) Strategy**

The ST strategy focuses on utilizing the region's strengths to mitigate potential threats. This includes the promotion of natural attractions, eco-tourism, and cultural heritage to increase their visibility among potential tourists. Environmental preservation and conservation of tourist sites are imperative to sustain their appeal. Allocating additional budgetary resources for infrastructure improvements and the enhancement of tourist attractions will also be crucial. Moreover, promoting local cuisine, crafts, customs, and traditions will not only enrich the tourist experience but also strengthen the region's identity.

Supporting private organizations in the development of more accommodation options will help meet the increasing demand from visitors.

### **Weaknesses-Threats (WT) Strategy**

The WT strategy aims to reduce the region's weaknesses while avoiding external threats. A crucial element of this strategy involves fostering connectivity among the five provinces to create a cohesive tourism network. The development of a comprehensive strategic plan that promotes collaboration among organizations and local residents is essential. Conducting seasonal surveys to assess tourist numbers and ensure adequate accommodation is another priority. Improvements in cleanliness and waste management practices are vital to maintaining a welcoming environment for visitors. Additionally, leveraging social media for tourism promotion and organizing stakeholder meetings will facilitate the exchange of ideas aimed at preserving and optimizing the region's tourism potential, ultimately increasing visitor numbers.

Ultimately, the researcher gathered opinions from all stakeholders and identified several key recommendations. First, government entities should focus on creating value from the culture and customs associated with water, such as promoting river and canal tourism, supporting sustainable tourism, and fostering cultural creative tourism. Additionally, it is essential for the government to continue and promote cultural practices in the region. Second, private organizations should also emphasize the value of water-related culture and customs, including river and canal tourism, while promoting Agro-tourism in agricultural areas. Local residents expressed their agreement with both government and private organizations on these initiatives, advocating for the creation and promotion of cultural values linked to water, the continuation of local customs, and the enhancement of Agro-tourism in agricultural regions.

## **DISCUSSION**

After collecting data from interviews with stakeholders and conducting focus group discussions, the researcher concluded that the anticipated increase in excursionists, tourists, and visitors in the future is expected to be gradual and will not adversely impact tourism. However, the development of tourist attractions is deemed necessary. Government organizations should prioritize the promotion of cultural tourism, sustainable tourism, and creative tourism. Private organizations should focus on enhancing the value of cultural practices associated with water, including river and canal tourism, while also supporting sustainable tourism and Agro-tourism initiatives. Furthermore, each province should develop its tourist attractions in the following ways:

**Buengkan Province:** Create value of culture and customs related to water such as travel in rivers or canals, support conservative tourism, cultural creative tourism etc., continue and promote culture and customs in the area, follow the Khong River Civilization Path, and develop tourism in all dimensions: ecological, cultural, and the Khong River Civilization tourism.

**Loei Province:** Create value of culture and customs related to water such as travel in rivers or canals, support conservative tourism, cultural creative tourism etc., continue and promote culture and customs in the area.

**Nongbualamphu Province:** Promote Tourism Attractions to be Standard, and- emphasize on Public-relations to the tourists.

**Nongkhai Province:** Canals, River Tourism City, and Connects to Laos, the neighboring country.

**Udonthani:** Create value of culture and customs related to water such as travel in rivers or canals, support conservative tourism, cultural creative tourism etc., and promote MICE Tourism to be MICE center

Local residents should collaborate to both government and private organizations to promote culture and customs in the area to promote cultural and creative and Agro-tourism.

The recommendations for further studies were:

- 1( The study of the satisfaction of the tourists both Thai and foreigners.
- 2( Preserve and conserve the environment sustainably by studying the environment and the surroundings.
- 3( Create the master plan to develop the tourist attractions and connect to the whole area and neighboring country.

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