Developing a new economic tourism route on the 'Laitang' application through the culture of consuming Isan food to sustainably enhance economic value for the community - Year 2.

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Abstract - This research article focuses on creating a food tourism route in Maha Sarakham Province, highlighting Isan cuisine that features beef, a key aspect of the region's food culture. The project's goal is to enhance tourism and support the local economy through technology and marketing efforts. An app named "Lai Thang" was created to gather details about restaurants, menus, and routes for tourists, as well as to produce various promotional materials to advertise both the app and the restaurants. The study involved 20 participating restaurants in Maha Sarakham Province and 297 users of the "LaiTang" app. The findings show that the app and marketing materials were well-received by users and restaurants involved in the project. User satisfaction was high, with an average rating of 4.88 out of 5. An assessment of the 14 restaurants in 2023 indicated that most saw stable or increased revenues following their participation, with 5% reporting higher sales, 80% maintaining their sales, and 15% experiencing a decrease. This suggests that the project has been effective in boosting the local economy. Overall, this research helps advance food tourism in Maha Sarakham Province and adds economic value to the local community.

Keywords: Evaluation, promotion media, satisfaction, usability, Laitang application

1. Introduction

Thailand is home to diverse communities that depend on each other, shaped by traditional practices and experiences. The country boasts abundant resources, particularly in agriculture, which have led to unique culinary traditions passed down through generations. Isan, the northeastern region, is renowned for its distinct food culture, including both

cooked and raw beef dishes, reflecting local beliefs and practices.

Maha Sarakham, a secondary tourism destination, lacks the prominence of major tourist cities. To enhance tourism, the province aims to develop a new economic tourism route through the "Laitang" app, showcasing Isan's unique beef-based cuisine. This initiative seeks to attract "Beef Lovers" and promote local eateries, thereby boosting economic value sustainably.

The project, funded by Mahasarakham University's Research and Academic Service Promotion Office for the fiscal year 2024, continues from last year's efforts to document and promote Isan's food culture and local restaurants, contributing to sustainable community development.

2. Materials and methods

This project involved fieldwork to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to enhance the completeness and commercial benefits for shops. The implementation followed the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) framework with activities categorized into upstream, midstream, and downstream processes, as outlined below:

2.1 Upstream Activities

Field surveys were conducted to gather initial data from nominated meat and Isan food shops, as well as consumer feedback in the community. The data helped identify target groups as defined by the Office of Research Promotion and Academic Services, Mahasarakham University, in Mahasarakham Province. A total of 20 shops were selected.

- Meetings and planning were conducted before field surveys.
- Field data collection was carried out in several districts: Mueang Mahasarakham, Wapi Pathum, Na Dun, Phayakkhaphum Phisai, Yang Sisurat, Kantharawichai, and Chiang Yuen.
- The collected data were analyzed to select 20 target shops.

2.2 Midstream Activities

Fieldwork was conducted to produce video content and collect in-depth information for creating promotional materials for the shops. Infographics highlighting each shop's signature dishes were made, and the "Laithang" app was developed to include navigation and promotional information for 20 shops.

- **Video Production**
  1. Planning and design meetings were held.
  2. Data collection, recording, and editing were performed.
  3. Quality checks and revisions were made.
  4. Media quality was evaluated by shop operators.
  5. The videos were published on YouTube and the "Laithang" app.
- **Graphic Design for Business Promotion**
  1. Infographics and promotional stickers were created for each shop.
  2. The application system was delivered and usage guidelines were provided.
  3. Sales promotion media were evaluated.

- **Development of the "Laithang" App**
  1. Meetings were held for app design and planning.
  2. System development and testing were carried out.
  3. The app's usability was evaluated by users.
  4. Adjustments were made, and the app was published on the website of the Office of Academic Services, Mahasarakham University.
  5. Ongoing maintenance and updates were performed.

2.3 Downstream Activities

Market response and satisfaction with promotional activities and media were tested among target groups. A summary report was prepared, and promotional materials were distributed.

- **Satisfaction and Impact Evaluation**
  1. Satisfaction with the app and business promotion media was assessed using evaluation forms, with average satisfaction scores of at least 4.5.
  2. The impact of the project was analyzed through data collected during implementation.
  3. A summary report was compiled with analysis, suggestions, and recommendations for further project improvements.

- **Economic Impact Assessment of Participating Shops**
  1. The performance of 14 shops from the 2023 fiscal year was assessed through interviews focusing on promoted food types and overall factors affecting business outcomes.
  2. A final report was prepared with insights and recommendations for future project improvements.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using statistical software to calculate averages ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviations (S.D.). Results were interpreted as follows:

- **Evaluation of Promotional Media Quality**
  1. Scores of 4.51-5.00 indicate very high quality.
  2. Scores of 3.51-4.50 indicate high quality.
  3. Scores of 2.51-3.00 indicate medium quality.
  4. Scores of 1.51-2.50 indicate low quality.
  5. Scores of 1.00-1.50 indicate very low quality.

- **Evaluation of App Usage Satisfaction**
  1. Scores of 4.51-5.00 indicate very high satisfaction.
  2. Scores of 3.51-4.50 indicate high satisfaction.
  3. Scores of 2.51-3.00 indicate medium satisfaction.
  4. Scores of 1.51-2.50 indicate low satisfaction.
  5. Scores of 1.00-1.50 indicate very low satisfaction.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Results
Summary and Discussion of the Evaluation of Promotional Media and Satisfaction Assessment of the "Laithang" Application
- Evaluation of the Quality of Promotional Media

The evaluation of the quality of promotional media for the new economic tourism route development project through the "Laithang" application revealed that business operators were highly satisfied ($\bar{x}$= 4.92). This was particularly evident in the presentation of information, content that enhances the user experience and is practically applicable, as well as clear voice narration ($\bar{x}$= 5.00). These results indicate that the media effectively meets the needs of business operators, contributing to sustainable business growth for shops and communities.
- Evaluation of User Satisfaction and Market Response of the "Laithang" Application in Year 2

The satisfaction assessment of the "Laithang" application users showed overall satisfaction at a very high level ($\bar{x}$= 4.88). Users placed the most importance on usability ($\bar{x}$= 4.92), highlighting the application's ability to meet user needs and serve as a valuable source of information that aligns with user expectations.

3.2 Discussion
The evaluation results of both aspects demonstrate the success of the development and use of promotional media and the "Laithang" application in boosting sales and enhancing economic value for communities. Business operators expressed high satisfaction, reflecting the application's effectiveness in promoting community businesses.

4. Conclusions

The project to develop the "Laitang" application, aimed at promoting tourism and supporting Isan food businesses, successfully achieved its goals. The project collected data from 20 Isan food restaurants and developed the "Laitang" app and promotional media to engage target audiences. Satisfaction and market response assessments indicated positive feedback, with over 1,000 visits and users of the app and 1,000 followers on social media. Most participating restaurants maintained stable sales, some experienced an increase, while a small portion saw a decline due to economic factors and varying cultural eating habits across different areas.

Acknowledgments

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