

Thailand as a Strategic Tourism Hub in ASEAN: Driving Regional Integration, Sustainable Development, and Post-Pandemic Recovery

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Abstract

This paper looks at how Thailand is changing its tourism strategy with the Thailand NEXT plan from 2025 to 2035. It checks out how Thailand is rethinking its tourism after the pandemic by looking at new traveler habits and what's going on in global tourism. The plan attempts to remove things that stop growth by getting people involved, changing policies, and coming up with new experiences.

The main things they're focusing on are using Thai culture, food, and spiritual spots, and growing health and medical tourism. Things like real Thai culture, tasty food, relaxing wellness trips, and cheap medical stuff (especially for old people) are seen as what makes Thailand different. The paper says that Thailand's mix of culture, wellness, and healthcare can make it a top place for tourism in the future.

Keywords: Cultural Soft Power; Culinary Tourism; Spiritual Tourism; Health Tourism; Medical Tourism; Wellness Retreats; Elderly Care; Post-Pandemic Travel; Sustainable Tourism; Tourism Innovation; Thai Culture; Tourism Strategy

1. Introduction

Thailand's travel and tourism scene has changed a lot. It's got a real chance to become the top spot for investment in these areas worldwide, which makes it super competitive. But travelers today are not like they used to be. The pandemic made people stop, think, and change, and tourism is no different. To improve things, the way people spend money is different, and so tourism needs to change too so it can be competitive. The year 2025 is a big deal for Thailand's travel and tourism, and it's a chance for the industry to lead the way in global tourism again.

To deal with this chance, the Thailand NEXT thing was made to get everyone involved in travel and tourism, locally and globally, to work together. The goal is to come up with a shared plan and vision for doing well by working together and talking to each other. It's a shot for Thailand to get back on top and lead the global travel and tourism industry.

The idea is to remove what's stopping travel, tourism, and good experiences, and to create new things that help the industry. When travel is affected, it means looking at what affects travel interest and the delivery of experiences in terms of how things work. The other idea is to create new types of partnerships. It also means reducing how the global crisis affects travel and tourism. Pandemic or the pandemic, working economies were becoming a thing in many places, but they were only used in some areas. It is important for policymakers to understand how the new normal impacts tourism, it requires them to rethink what tourism will look like and involve more people in coming up with ideas.

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2. Cultural Soft Power and Authenticity

2.1. Universidad de Arte y Ciencias Sociales - ARTECS

Around the world, there's a growing awareness of how culture and education can shape a country's image. This goes hand in hand with the rise of soft power the idea that countries can boost their influence through culture and values. To stand out and compete internationally, countries need to craft compelling stories based on their cultural roots, language, history, and education. This report looks at how Thailand is using soft power, especially since it's already known for its cultural tourism.

In this globalized world, national identity is key to preserving cultural heritage. Globalization can threaten to erase cultural uniqueness as well as lead to cultural sameness, many governments, especially in developing countries, are emphasizing their national identity to push back against this trend.

Thailand's government has been actively promoting its culture for tourism in recent years. They see cultural heritage tourism to boost the economy, and they aim to showcase Thai culture in an attractive way. Tourism can be seen as a kind of soft industry, and cultural tourism should be about learning and understanding. Tourists want to connect with a place's culture, history, and daily life. As a developing country, Thailand has lots to offer in terms of cultural heritage.

2.2. Thai Cuisine and Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism is about traveling to a place to experience its food and drink, and the culture that goes with it. This includes visiting food festivals, markets, and trying local specialties, these can be experiences such as eating and drinking and buying food products. Gastronomy, on the other hand, is more about the study of food, often focusing on fancy food or food that's unique to a particular culture or country. Culinary tourism has become more popular since the 2000s, but it's still new in Thailand. With its strong farming traditions, Thai food and drinks are a major draw for visitors. Thai dishes are generally made with fresh ingredients and offer a mix of sour, spicy, sweet, and salty flavors. These recipes have been passed down through generations. Every culture has its own food traditions, but it's the unique food culture of a country that attracts culinary tourists.

People visit Thailand to learn about Thai food, its fresh ingredients, where it comes from, and the culture behind it. They want to taste authentic Thai dishes, from street food to fine dining. Thai culinary tourism is about more than just eating; it's about learning about the past, culture, and nature, and it emphasizes sustainability of local farms. Newer generations of Thai people are switching from street food to restaurants. Price and differences in food standards can have an impact on culinary tourism. Gastronomic tourism activities in Thailand are varied and common. These activities include food sourcing, processing and cooking, serving and consuming, shopping and collecting, educational excursion, and event/festival.

2.3. Cultural Festivals: Celebrating Tradition

Most festivals are based on the lunar calendar. The main Thai holidays are March 10 (Makha Bucha Day), April 6 (Chakri Memorial Day), April 18 (Visakha Bucha Day), May 5 (Coronation Day), May 15 (Asanha Bucha Day), July 16 (Khao Pansa Day), July 17 (Buddhist Lent Festival), August 13 (Queen Mother's Birthday), August 23 (Chulalongkorn Day), and September 25 (Royal Barge Procession). Cultural festivals bring people together to celebrate their shared identity and culture. They show a nation's sense of identity and are used to maintaining unique cultural traits and a sense of togetherness. Festivals can spark creativity by finding new ways to present traditions. They involve the local community, raising awareness about sustainability, these festivals often represent the collective memories of people which come from folklores, songs, dances, and oral tradition. A cultural festival is a convincing tool to present culture through art.

2.4. Spiritual Tourism and Local Wisdom

Thailand's natural beauty, agriculture, traditions, and culture provide lots of opportunities for tourism. To stay competitive in the global market, Thailand aims to become a tourism center in Asia through its Thailand 2020 plan. One way to do this is to market local wisdom as a kind of Spiritual Tourism. Tourists can have deep spiritual experiences by learning from local traditions. The world could learn about Thai culture through scientific study. Resilience is a system property in communities where social connections exist. Strong and adaptable urban areas can balance economic, social, and environmental factors. However, connecting these things can be hard, so cities pursue financial, social, environmental, and health security. Cities work together to tackle issues like poverty, crime, disasters, and climate

change, while facing disconnection in economic globalization. Simpson, a less prosperous area in London, is disconnected from nearby East London.

3. Health and Medical Tourism

Thailand's tourism market is getting a boost from health and medical travel. This is happening because people around the world are getting richer, transportation is easier, info is more available, and travel services/rules are working better. When it comes to health, people want help from doctors, hospitals, or healthcare systems. This help includes treatment, prevention, recovery, and diet advice. Besides the usual medical stuff, some people want other types of treatment and rehab, which are also offered by health experts and networks. The best places for health tourism are known for their local knowledge and skills in medicine.

Thailand is a good spot for medical services like surgeries (both big and small) and things like stress relief and check-ups. Plastic surgery and heart surgery are the two fastest-growing areas, and people come to Thailand for these. The country is seen as a good place to get the most for your money, with options for different budgets. Thailand has both expensive and cheap treatments.

In 2020, the number of health tourists in Thailand dropped, and it fell to 4th place worldwide. Things are getting better, but it will take some time to get back on top. Thailand aims to attract wealthy health tourists again by improving its Medical Services Authority and keeping prices reasonable. Here are five things they plan to do to get back on track.

3.1. Medical Services in Thailand

3.1.1. Thailand's healthcare is divided into three parts

Government, private, and volunteer. The government gives free or low-cost healthcare (under 30 baht). Government hospitals and clinics are well-equipped and staffed with good doctors and nurses. Thai people usually only go to private hospitals for serious illnesses or when they need special care. Private hospitals aim to give better service. Most doctors in both types of hospitals are well-trained and licensed, and all medical tools are approved. The volunteer sector is usually only needed for those who want traditional Thai treatments; older folks are very respected, and traditional treatments often use herbs and natural stuff. It's also normal to see monks praying for the sick.

Most Thai doctors get their degrees after six years. Many go on to specialize in areas like internal medicine, kids' health, pregnancy, or surgery. After another 3-6 years of training and a final test, they become certified specialists. Most of these specialists work in government hospitals, while others work in medical centers.

Besides the regular system, some people practice medicine without proper training. You'll probably hear languages other than English and Thai in hospitals and clinics that treat tourists. Private hospitals and clinics are up-to-date and have equipment as good as anywhere else. Government hospitals are also modern but aren't used as much by foreigners because of the language difference and billing issues. Most provinces have both types of hospitals. Tourist cities are getting more hospitals and clinics that can treat foreign patients. They offer care for ongoing and sudden illnesses, health checkups, wellness plans, dental work, chiropractic, sports medicine, health management, weight control, and chemo.

3.2. Cosmetic Surgery Trends

The cosmetic surgery industry in Thailand is growing fast and trying to meet the different needs of people from Thailand and other countries. The country is known for gender-affirming surgery, but other things are becoming popular too. This includes cheaper procedures and less invasive treatments.

Besides gender-affirming surgery, traditional treatments like face lifts and breast jobs are targeting people from Thailand and Asia, which is a trend around the world. They're also trying to reach more people, like younger women with average incomes. New clinics are popping up that are trying to be trendy, with lifestyle clinics offering different procedures for women in their late twenties and early thirties. Things like labiaplasty, buttock jobs, and scar removal are also becoming more spoken about to get more people interested in cosmetic surgery.

Cost is also a big deal. Cheaper options are getting more competitive, and before/after pics are all over social media. But things are changing, with Thai clinics affecting Korean clinics, especially in beauty centers. There are also stricter rules about new procedures and advertising because social media can make risks seem bigger than they are, which can be bad for patients and clinics.

3.3. Holistic Wellness Retreats

Thailand has all kinds of wellness options for visitors. Thai culture has always valued wellness, like herbal medicine, massage, spa treatments, meditation, and good food. To get wealthy, health-conscious tourists, Thailand gives them wellness products and services that fit their budget and lifestyle. The history and culture behind these practices can be great classes for tourists who want a real Thai experience. Bangkok now has many specialty health and wellness services that include Thai culture. Fancy places that offer retreats with health coaching, spa treatments, yoga, meditation, and good food are also becoming popular in other cities in Thailand. Training camps (like for Muay Thai), health monitoring, herbal medicine, and wellness resorts are also becoming more common, along with meal programs. Health tourism is expected to grow a lot as the demand for natural wellness treatments increases. You can make different wellness programs by mixing health products and services with what Thailand's tourism industry already offers. Here's a plan for medical tourism in Thailand up to 2035, with different stages of growth. In the beginning, the goal should be wellness products and services with local and specific advertising. This includes creating local health tourism spots with the help of the government and communities, as well as comparing them to the best ones from other countries. It should also include alternative treatments that focus on good routines, wellness, and prevention.

3.4. Elderly Care and Affordable Treatments

The pandemic has made healthcare more important, especially for older people. The number of people over 60 in Asia, including Thailand, is growing quickly. But it's getting more expensive to take care of their health, with high costs for hospitals and rehab. Stroke recovery in Thailand cost more than in other countries in 2020. But rehab in Thailand takes longer. Countries with longer rehab need more time and doctor visits. So, it's important to find a balance between good service and affordable costs.

At the same time, things like transplants and heart disease can cost a lot to treat. Even if some treatments don't take long, the pricey medical treatment market is a good chance to make money in healthcare. So, as the demand for services grows, health providers need to make unique services for different countries, including elderly care and affordable treatments that give good returns on investment.

Elderly care will be a focus for healthcare startups, especially in countries with many older people or those who can afford good care. In Thailand, many traditional elder care services are growing their options. One place is known for its retreat in North Thailand with yoga and meditation, while others focus on resorts in family-friendly spots. Some providers also offer home visits along with hospital visits. One-on-one care will also be an option, where one caregiver can help multiple older people in their homes.

4. Nature-Based and Eco-Tourism

Thailand has a lot of natural beauty, with its mountains, forests, beaches, and wetlands, which really helps its tourism industry. More people are getting into health-related tourism, like traditional medicine, fitness centers, and wellness getaways, and that's becoming popular around the world. Though other countries have checked out health tourism, Thailand hasn't as much. Thailand's resorts could really grow that health tourism industry, but more study in that area is needed. Hopefully, this study can help new research on the tourism trends in Thailand. Thailand has a great setup with its nature and weather. Plus, the countries around it could be good partners or friendly rivals for drawing in nature lovers. As nature tourism grows, so does the number of people visit places within Thailand. Also, its ecotourism is well known, combining well with business. These trips let people see the wild and wonderful places in the northern part of the country. Still, Thai tourism deals with problems, like not being able to share info, keeping ecotourism up to standards, having enough nature tourism spots, and being good at nature attractions and ecotourism. When it comes to being sustainable, tourism needs to focus on coming back strong, working together, keeping things safe, and taking care of different setups.

4.1. Looking at Thailand's Many Landscapes

Thailand wants to be a top tourism spot for giving sustainable and great times, so it wants to change the industry. Thailand NEXT has big plans to use changing tourism trends to its advantage. Thailand NEXT wants to be in the top 10 for tourism growth, make 4 trillion Baht in tourism money, and see 90 million visitors by 2035.

The Thai tourism sector has done well in the past with more visitors, cash, and businesses happening while global tourism changes. From 2015 to 2019, Thailand not only had the best tourism money growth in the area at 8.10%, but also the best growth in spending by tourists in the country. Thailand is now the second-best spot in ASEAN, making a tourism profit of 0.36 billion Baht yearly, or 3.6 trillion Baht spent yearly.

It's time to find and use new ways to become a high-quality, sustainable, and new tourism spot. Some tactics are being chosen, which will help make a detailed plan for using suggestions. It's all about branding, marketing, making new products, money, giving rides, and making people aware.

4.2. Keeping Nature Safe and Good Practices

Thailand, which has much to tourists to come, must get tourism position to keep its tourism industry running and keeping itself in a great place connecting with Indochina. Tourism Thailand has the vision for "Thailand NEXT: the Future of Global Tourism for 2025–2035".

Thailand should be seen as a smart and healthy place that keeps safety and health travel together and solves pollution problems while working toward green, zero-carbon, and sustainable plans. Thailand must work on being a healthy tourism state in all tourism actions. It must also show low-carbon and green tourism in all areas, most of all transportation, lodging, activities, trash, and tourist control.

Thailand should decide to market and grow in a healthy, eco-friendly, creative, and smart way with a clear plan, duties, and ways to keep track of things. A Thailand whole-of-government view would turn the plan to think of Thailand as a healthy and responsible destination, while keeping up with the 20-year plan and National Economic and Social Development Plan (Hassan, 2008).

4.3. Tourism Plans

After COVID-19, people wanted to get near nature, so tourism preferences could be changed. Outdoor are going to be liked, so exotic plans need to be had. These plans will need to look closely at new travelers in Asia. Thailand can use these spots (Hassan, 2008).

4.3.1. Hiking or Climbing

Mountain climbing is getting big and has helped Thailand known to climbers. Info climbing is rare, so websites and maps should be made for the area. This thinking will help with hiking and trekking, which is valuable. To make trips from outside the country great, allow outside travelers to see Thailand's area.

Surfing. More surfing will get awareness by people. With the government's acceptance of communication between countries, tourists may land in Thai surf spots, which will grow need great help. Trips. Trips are a good idea still.

Ecotourism. Foreign scale where others still live should be used for unique views. Money help will be asked for development. Exchange with travelers is good for ads. Passengers will be great and modeled.

5. Digital Infrastructure in Tourism

The National Innovation Agency (NIA) is putting \$1 million from the Tourism Development Fund toward making Thailand's tourism industry smarter. They're doing this through a project called Tourism 4.0: Thailand NEXT.

The NIA knows that Thailand's tourism faces some big problems: too many tourists at attractions, disasters, climate change, and pandemics. They think tech and innovation are key to boosting the tourism industry, especially since the global tourism market will likely change a lot after the current pandemic.

So, the NIA wants to help three groups in tourism level up with new tech: tourist spots, service businesses, and the tourists themselves. This project should open doors for innovation and create new, smart services. This will strengthen the tourism sector in the long run. The project fits with the Tourism Development Plan B.E. 2560–2564 and the Tourism Development Plan B.E. 2565–2570. New products and services will appear in areas like MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), health, wellness, and culture. Everything would be based on tech and innovation.

In today's world, things like Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and other tech are important for handling tourism and getting travelers familiar with online booking. Tourism planners need to keep up with all the travel options people have. It also means that if they want people to keep coming back, one-time events need to turn into long-term attractions. Big data can be used to prevent problems, adding to current safety measures (Hassan, 2008). We need to learn from the past to avoid mass tourism and encourage people to travel to new places (昭, 2018).

5.1. Investing in Smart Technology

Over the next ten years, Thailand will be using a lot more tech to make tourism better for travelers. Tech can improve things like experience, privacy, and safety. People need to know how to use these smart tools to get the most out of them. Tech should be included in jobs and services as well. Cleanliness is also important. We should also study how other countries turn new technologies into something new in countries like Thailand. Looking at past failures can help us fix future problems. So, we need to figure out what tech to invest in and what we already have (昭, 2018). Policy people should look at things from the bottom up, focusing on cities instead of just the country. Cities are becoming tourism hubs, while countries are more like administrators. Before, tourism was handled at the country level. But now, travelers have more money and different wants. For example, because of COVID-19, they care more about cleanliness, safety, and privacy. Because of this, choices are being made at the city level, and policies are being created to help cities do well. So, it's important to know policy options and trade-offs. Social scientists, including economists and political scientists, need to come up with ideas and plans to help share knowledge from successful cities. In the end, each major city in Thailand will get suggestions on what policies to adopt and change based on their own situation.

5.2. How Digital Marketing Affects Tourism

Right now, 70% of people research travel online. Every year, 15% more travelers share their thoughts, photos, and videos on travel websites. In the last ten years, 1,500 travel sites have popped up, with more sites that let people share their own content. Social media is useful. The main social networks have gained hundreds of millions of users a month over the last two years. Out of 90 million travelers, 40 million have shared their travel stories. The internet, and especially social media, is a way to get these people to support a tourism board, marketing group, hotel, restaurant, or tourism company (Fathima Nuskiya, 2018).

When people have good experiences and share them, it gets the word out and boosts sales. People go to these websites. By doing this, users hear what suppliers are offering, like them, and share their travel experiences. Other consumers see these comments, ratings, and photos. Tourism groups are working to give customers extra content on travel social media to get people to visit.

6. Sustainable travel initiatives

Thailand's Tourism Authority just announced its Thailand NEXT marketing push. It's all about getting tourism back on track after the COVID-19 mess. This new campaign comes as the TAT keeps pushing Thailand as a must-see place. Thailand NEXT has plans for travelers who are now more into things like wellness trips, eco-tourism, and checking out local culture.

6.1. What Tourists Want Now

The TAT also shared research about how tourists have changed after COVID-19. This study helped them create plans to draw in these new travelers, showing how much travel has changed. People now want to visit places that are ready for climate change, have less pollution, and work to save animals. A lot of them also want to avoid transportation that burns a lot of fossil fuels.

6.2. Too Many Tourists?

Pushing too hard for lots of tourists isn't a good plan for the long run. When tons of tourists flood a small island or town, or when it's tough to handle feeding and housing them all, that's not good. Thailand's Similan Islands National Park is a good example. Thailand needs to learn from what happened there.

6.3. Making Tourism Responsible

If all tourism becomes responsible, about 2 to 3 billion people (around 30% of all tourists) could travel responsibly. If Thailand has good plans, it could welcome about 200 million of them. That could spread money around and help close the gap between the rich and poor in the country.

Thailand has so much to offer, like mountains, lakes, forests, and beaches. Many of these are already national parks. Luckily, they're safe places. On top of that, Thailand has a rich culture with old sites, buildings, traditions, and festivals. That makes Thai people rich in culture in Asia. So, Thailand should focus on responsible tourism that protects nature and culture. Tourists are willing to pay for it. The country has hotels, tour companies, and restaurants ready to serve tourists well. The public transportation system has also gotten better. Steps have been taken to get rid of low-quality hotels and illegal tour guides. Also, there are fewer tourism companies now, which means they're more organized and

care about doing things right for tourists. More cultural shows that mix art with entertainment have been added. The media is working to teach people about safe and good tourism, with help from local leaders.

6.4. Getting Locals Involved

Community-based tourism, which is about being responsible, is getting attention from the World Tourism Organization. Thailand's tourism industry has potential for this. Simple things like farming or fishing can be used for community tourism. Buddhist temples are good places for cultural tourism. So, people tried to find interesting tourism spots in Thailand and figure out how much tourists would pay. This should help make community-based tourism work well.

The world wants to grow and take care of the planet. Tourism can help by teaching people about different cultures and creating jobs. But tourism can also hurt the environment and society. Whether tourism helps or hurts depends on how it's done. Community-based tourism is a way to go against regular mass tourism. But it needs support to work. There's worry that it could lead to the same problems as regular tourism, like hurting local communities and damaging the environment.

Whale watching is a popular community-supported wildlife activity in North America. People think it helps people care more about saving whales. This idea was tested by looking at how tourists' attitudes changed after a whale watching trip. People's attitudes have changed, and there are things to study more closely. Problems with how the study was set up were looked at, and ideas for future studies were discussed.

7. The Role of Government and Policy in Tourism Development

For tourism to grow well, governments need to really get behind it. They should see how good tourism could be and create clear guidelines to help it grow in the right way. These guidelines should take care of things like keeping tourist spots and the areas around them in good shape, making sure it's easy to get to these places, giving tourists real experiences, and encouraging locals and visitors to get along (Masturoh Prasaliani, 2019). To have good guidelines, you need a clear idea of what you want tourism to be like in the future. It's tough to make and follow these guidelines if you don't have a stable, long-term plan. That's why it's important to have a vision for tourism that everyone can get behind, one that makes things better for everyone. The government, local groups, and businesses should then work together to come up with ways to make this vision a reality.

Back then, there wasn't a group in charge of tourism. The number of tourists in Bangkok was increasing quickly and without any order, and the government didn't have a plan to control it (Chayasirisobhon and Batra, 2019). The main issue was that the main office in Bangkok and the Tourism Authority of Thailand offices abroad could basically put rules in place. The government chose to let local areas manage tourism themselves, but they still needed rules to keep things stable.

7.1. Tourism Rules

As Thailand looks to the future of tourism, it needs to be ready in every way to keep growing. Having the right rules is a big part of this, as they can help tourism grow and make new and interesting things for tourists to see and do. Besides the usual rules, there need to be things in place to change tourism in Thailand by creating new projects, setting up funds, making society more open, and making cities exciting with good timing tourism rules.

The tourism rules in countries like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan – which are Thailand's competitors – usually have these things: (1) They see tourism as a way to make money and create jobs (2) they have plans for international tourism that include things like attracting foreign investment and events; (3) They have a main tourism group that plans for tourism that lasts, with advice from the World Tourist Organization (WTO); (4) They spend a lot of money each year to promote tourism around the world; (5) They see tourism as a key industry and have policies to help it, like the 14 policies Japan has to make tourism better (Hassan, 2008); and (6) South Korea has free trade agreements with 40 countries to make its tourism more competitive.

7.2. Working Together

Another way for the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MOTS) to help tourism is by working with private companies. The Ministry connects government and businesses to help tourism grow through different relationships by working together on tourism investment at the national and local levels. The main ways these groups work together are through big projects, city tourism management, a Tourism Collaboration Network, and a Partnership in Tourism Promotion

network. There are good and bad things about the government and businesses working together, since each has its own strengths. Cooperation can help make city tourism better (R Kulkarni and Jalilvand, 2017).

There are chances to work together that can make city tourism better. First, city planning can make it easier to get around if regulations and laws are followed. Second, rules on how cities are run can make tourism better. Third, the government can give money to get activities and events going. The last chance is in the tourism workforce – the government can help find and provide training to help workers get better.

At the same time, there are bad things about the government and businesses working together to manage city tourism. When it comes to city planning, inconsistent rules, little power for politicians, and few chances to check things are issues.

8. Challenges facing Thailand's tourism sector

Thailand's tourism industry faces lots of problems moving forward. These range from safety and political issues to poor infrastructure, cleanliness, environmental protection, service quality, and the need for new and interesting tourism options. There are a lot of things the industry in Thailand has to deal with. Right now, it's important to support and invest in the Thai government's plans and make sure everyone in the tourism industry knows they need to help Thailand develop its tourism.

Many Asian countries want a bigger piece of the international tourism pie. Some, like Hong Kong, which is good for business travelers, and Singapore, which is a transit hub, are already major players. Manila is becoming a convention center. Places like South Korea and Taiwan got ahead by using strong marketing. Right next door, China has tons of cultural and natural attractions. Governments and tourism businesses in the area are working together to copy successful ideas from other places. In Thailand, it's super important to get what these changes mean for the economy so we can get ready for what's coming (Hanvivatpong, 1996).

To get more tourists, Thailand needs to understand its rivals well, knowing what they do better than they do. Each country has things it's good at and things it's not so good at. So, we can create marketing plans that take advantage of their weaknesses and steer clear of their strengths. The things we must face will be different depending on where you look, from all of Asia to just Thailand. For Thailand, that goes into figuring out how nearby countries can team up to make a solid regional tourism offer, which helps answer the question: Why should you put money into tourism in Thailand? (Hassan, 2008).

8.1. Environmental Issues

Many countries have amazing scenery, but the tourism boom is destroying it. Natural wonders are slowly turning into tourist traps just to earn income, which leads to the loss of nature's wilderness. Right now, there are still some beautiful beaches and mountains that haven't been wrecked by people, but if things don't change, they won't be around for long.

A recent study showed that 84% of people think eco-tourism will get more popular. This shows that more people are aware of the environmental problems we're facing. But only 30% think eco-tourism is good for the environment. It seems like tourism businesses have heard the message about being eco-friendly and are starting eco-tourism projects to make money. Charities and international groups that work in places like the Philippines and Thailand are sometimes used by tourism businesses that charge high prices. It all gets bad when the right communities only get a tiny bit of the money (Hassan, 2008). For a stable ecosystem, 57% think it's hard to achieve, while only 12% think it's easy. When it comes to business, over two-thirds of people think Thailand could be the top eco-tourism spot, at least in Southeast Asia.

It takes forever for natural wonders to form, but it only takes a year to build touristy stuff. However, this way of building up tourism, as said by some people, could lead to either new wonders being created or the old ones disappearing. One alternative is to just stop tourism in developed nations, where even charming views are off-limits to tourists (Azam et al., 2019). National Parks in America are developed with control or define "wilderness" like Grand Canyon or Cape Town, which are images in books. Maybe you don't see a place because it's not good enough, or it's crowded with tourists. Either way, some people think education is super important for natural wonders to last, slow down the tourism boom, and destinations should know how to spare spots that are in danger. If it cannot, it would be easier to simply educate tourists that development is a problem, and too strict control kills the original wonder and magic.

8.2. Competition from Other Destinations

Thailand used to be the place to go. With awesome temples, culture, beaches, health retreats, and friendly people, it's well-known for tourism. But lots of people see Thailand as a cheap destination or even a troubled country because of its sex tourism and natural disasters. Thailand has changed its high spending tourists. Sadly, low-cost airlines have shown up in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Nearby countries like Nepal, Myanmar, and Bhutan are doing what Thailand did 30 years ago, with mixed results. Places like Cancun, Barcelona, Las Vegas, and Dubai went from cheap package deals to upscale event cities. What happened? People think of Thailand as a place that has less to offer than before. that was recently done. Is it too late for Thailand to step up? One competitor had a strategy a long time ago. It wasn't luck. World tourism has grown a lot. Events after 9/11 helped turn the Middle East into a big player.

Because of this, Thailand's tourism customers are booking more than one place, making hotel reservations at the last minute, and going between different destinations. Customers who are always on the move think like travel packagers, and using travel tools is important for all parts of the tourism system. As such, costs per consumed segments per customer are getting a focal point. Industry-wise, not only does the selling price of each ingredient have to be reduced but also the margin must be decreased as well. With investing in new hardware, competitors can get new technology during research. Low-cost destinations will follow some of the success that Disneyland and Singapore. Climate, languages, time zone and starting point for mass tourism products will allow global edge.

9. Future Trends in Global Tourism

New tech and changing customer habits are changing tourism, like the products and how people buy them. Now that prices and quality are evening out, people pick brands they feel connected to and think are making a positive impact. Because of this, business success will be measured by things other than just profit. The tourism and hospitality businesses have tons of chances to do well, but they need to get ready for what's next.

It's tough to say what tourism will look like in ten years. Even quick guesses about the market and its effect on businesses aren't solid these days. Still, it's vital to get ready so businesses invest wisely, and governments make smart changes to help tourism and hospitality grow. To handle the uncertainty, businesses can spot and react to trends. They should change how they think, from just guessing what will happen based on old trends to seeing things as a range of likely paths.

Airports need enough runway space to allow long flights, and hotels need to have the right number of rooms at different prices and quality levels, so travelers have options. So, it's crucial for places to be ready to give what's needed so they can profit from new air travel options. As budget airlines grow and things get more open, new locations and routes will appear. Also, business models will require travel offers to be priced and put together in a new way, since a lot of these will involve services that cross company lines.

9.1. Post-Pandemic Travel

The COVID-19 pandemic made the last few years (2020-2022) super hard on tourism. The pandemic led to travel restrictions early on (2020–2021), which closed many borders. Because of this, international tourist visits dropped by 61% worldwide in 2020, compared to 2019, and by 73% in Asia-Pacific. In 2021, the fall continued, at 73% globally and 82% in Asia-Pacific. Even as borders reopened, Thailand started bouncing back from the damage. Thailand's tourism sector held up okay during the local money problems, mostly entertainment and nice hotels in popular spots, like Thailand's beach clubs. Still, local tourists started acting differently; for example, travel groups canceled tours, while Airbnb hosts cleaned their places. Also, tourists avoided public transport, stayed in fancy hotels, joined local tours, and picked less busy parks. With the risk of big crowds, a mix of business and customer trip plans should be created to make sure travel does not lead to overcrowding or overwhelming local services (Piboonrungroj et al., 2023). Government groups probably want to balance helping tourism and keeping roads safe. We need good tracking in place. Local pros and groups can team up with the tourism board to handle plans and put them in place. Tourist routes to popular spots might need to be set up and shared. A trustworthy tourism group should help make sure experiences are safe and track them using a digital database. This way, tourists can pick fun, smart ideas while someone watches how they move. Crowds can be expected, busy spots can be found, and everyone can work together to manage things. Eventually, a system of digital experiences would start, with experts watching to see if the new rules worked.

9.2. New Markets and Demographics

9.2.1. The Rise of New Markets

The Future of Global Tourism. Tourism's big success in the 20th century came from the connection between people and beauty. But tourism in the 21st century has been influenced by shifts in climate, the growth of eastern countries, questions about ethics in tourism, and money gaps. International tourism has had a big impact on governments and leaders, as the east and west compete. By understanding tourism and studying the models of green tourism, we see the opportunity that comes with time. A fresh idea, Thailand NEXT, was pitched, building on the existing Thailand EAT platform.

After 30 years of success, the popular tourism point is ready for an updated Thailand EAT, powered by a holographic celebration of TAT/CAT C/SGA/AMT at the Bandstand, Suan Luang Rama IX for the Thailand NEXT happenings. Big shots led by business leaders attending the planes are the opportunity; passion, time, and energy are the real issues. Bangkok was selected as The Destination due to how well it balances time and cost, and how easy it is to manage the crowd. The Rise of New Markets: The Future of Global Tourism/System was picked to match the world's shift toward the east and the surprises.

The hope for tourism's future is in new markets. New markets are defined by the World Bank as countries with a GDP per person of less than \$18,000, though growth might slow down and it's not sure countries will keep growing after reaching that point (Hassan, 2008). The MDGs were hard to reach over 15 years from 2000. Emerging markets will be important in the future and have doubled the number of international tourists compared to developed countries, from less than half in 2000 to over 90% now (Ly, 2018).

10. Conclusion

Thailand is getting ready for a new era of tourism after the pandemic. What makes Thailand special – its culture and people – are key to keeping tourism going. So, to stay ahead in the tourism game, Thailand needs to protect these things through its food and hospitality, while also tackling big issues with forward-thinking ideas about greener tourism.

The future of travel will rely on communities and plans for reducing carbon emissions. By using clear language, these tourism ideas will change how we see Thai Tourism during the United Nations' focus on sustainable tourism. Simple info can spark questions and thoughts, leading to more studies and actions that help all types of tourism. Thailand wants everyone to help grow a sustainable, strong, and responsible future for world tourism.

Thailand NEXT wants other countries with cool cultures to share their stories and goods for a brighter world through different kinds of tourism. Experiences are treasures that can be shared, not owned. Thailand has a lot of these experiences, and local experiences can make people happy.

Thailand is preparing to take off into the post-pandemic future of global tourism. Thailand's greatest assets are its uniqueness, its culture, and the lifestyle of its people, which are factors for sustainable tourism. Thailand needs to come up with a plan to deal with how COVID-19 has changed tourism. To keep up with the times and protect the environment, it needs a plan for reducing carbon emissions and fighting climate change. Thai tourism now and in the future needs new ideas, better services, and a well-trained workforce.

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