

Transforming Rural Landscapes: Unleashing Agro-Tourism Potential Through Digital Media Interconnectivity

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Abstract

This study investigates digital media's collaborative potential and interconnectivity as public relations strategies aimed at enhancing agro-tourism in the Nong Kung Si District of Kalasin Province, Thailand. The study examined the interplay between digital media and agricultural tourism. The research evaluates how interconnected digital initiatives can effectively engage target audiences and improve tourist satisfaction. It utilized a mixed-methods approach where the data were collected through structured questionnaires to gauge perceptions of the online public relations efforts, assess the appropriateness of their components, and measure overall tourist satisfaction. Statistical analyses, including mean and standard deviation calculations, were employed to interpret the data. The findings highlight the critical role of interconnected digital media in promoting agro-tourism and identify best practices for fostering engagement and satisfaction among visitors. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how collaborative communication strategies can drive sustainable tourism development in rural areas, emphasizing the importance of interconnectivity in enhancing agro-tourism potential.

Keywords: *Agro-Tourism, Digital Media, Public Relations, Tourist Satisfaction, Communication Strategies.*

Introduction

Agricultural tourism is rapidly gaining traction as a significant form of travel, attracting individuals, communities, and societies across the globe. This burgeoning sector plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of life by fostering physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development through diverse participatory activities. Moreover, agricultural tourism cultivates spiritual experiences by facilitating meaningful interactions with nature and promoting social engagement, thereby deepening connections among visitors and local tourism sites.

In alignment with Thailand's strategic vision for 2024, agricultural tourism is being positioned as a cornerstone for the country's ambition to emerge as a premier global destination. The increasing interest in sustainable and nature-based travel has led to a surge in demand for agricultural tourism experiences, appealing particularly to environmentally conscious tourists. These sites not only enhance the reputation of local communities but also serve as vital attractions for visitors seeking authentic encounters with nature.

Focusing on Nong Kung Si District, this research highlights the area's substantial potential for agricultural tourism, characterized by its diverse natural attractions, including an array of flora and fauna, alongside rich cultural traditions and community lifestyles. However, the district currently faces challenges, including a deficit in tourism infrastructure, engaging activities, and effective promotional materials such as brochures, posters, infographics, and travel maps.

To address these gaps, it is essential to develop not only physical resources but also innovative media that spark interest and encourage visitation. The study especially focused on the significant community engagement as an essential part of sustaining agro-tourism. Thus, the research design was driven by innovative marketing strategies, entrepreneurial initiatives, and robust networking from the integrated collaboration among key stakeholders—government agencies, educational institutions, business entities, and local farmers. Consequently, this study aims to design and implement engaging promotional materials

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that leverage technology to enhance the visibility and appeal of agricultural tourism in Nong Kung Si District, Kalasin Province.

Related Research

Agricultural tourism, or agro-tourism, has emerged as a growing sector globally, offering opportunities for personal, social, and cultural enrichment through interactive, nature-based experiences.

Agricultural tourism in rural areas faces several challenges, one of the most significant being the lack of effective promotional media (Miller et al., 2023). In addition, the poor marketing strategies often result in low visibility of rural destinations, limiting the appeal to potential visitors. (*Marketing Your Agritourism Business*, n.d.). In particular, many rural agritourism businesses fail to leverage digital platforms effectively, leaving them dependent on traditional, less impactful methods like word-of-mouth and local advertising, which restrict their audience reach (Ngamchaleaw, B et al., 2023). According to Miller (2023), successful agritourism operations focus on niche markets and specialty activities, yet without proper promotion through websites, social media, or brochures, these unique offerings remain unknown to broader audiences

Another critical issue is the lack of investment in modern media to market rural tourism. Many small-scale operators do not have the resources or knowledge to develop effective marketing strategies that resonate with urban tourists who seek authentic rural experiences. As a result, rural areas often miss out on the growing demand for sustainable, nature-based tourism. Gilbert (1989) suggests that inadequate marketing severely hinders the socio-economic benefits that rural tourism can provide, such as job creation and infrastructure development. Then it is noted that without an integrated communication strategy, the potential of agritourism remains underdeveloped.

In recent years, studies have highlighted the increasing importance of communication strategies and media utilization in promoting sustainable tourism. For instance, Chenchitsin & Euajarusphan (2023) emphasize the need for community participation and media innovation to boost the appeal and sustainability of agro-tourism in Thailand, underscoring the potential of digital media to create meaningful interactions between tourists and rural communities. These efforts are aligned with global trends toward sustainable tourism that enhances both visitor engagement and local economic growth

In addition, the research by Sangpum (2024) demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating online and offline media in promoting agro-tourism, particularly in fostering community involvement. The study by Chimsuwan & Banterng (2023) in Samut Prakan Province reveals how participatory activities help bridge the gap between local communities and tourists, enhancing the overall experience identified high demand for modern promotional strategies, including digital platforms and traditional media, among farmers and tourists. This suggests the critical role of effective communication strategies in catering to evolving tourist preferences while supporting rural economies (Ngamchaleaw, B. et al., 2023)

To develop agritourism models that effectively balance environmental protection, community engagement, and economic benefits, Thailand can draw inspiration from countries like Japan. Promoting agritourism and sustainable tourism will enable tourists to learn about Thailand's agricultural practices and lifestyle in an environmentally friendly way. This approach not only offers visitors insight into traditional Thai farming but also deepens their appreciation for the country's rich agricultural heritage while providing income opportunities for rural communities. (*MABE Case _Issue 2024 No 4_March2024.Pdf*, n.d.). Ultimately, Thailand should leverage its diverse agritourism offerings to achieve sustainability in environmental, social, and economic aspects by applying best practices from other nations.

In light of these findings, the present study explores how digital media in various forms can further enhance agro-tourism in Nong Kung Si District by developing targeted communication strategies that meet the needs of both local stakeholders and eco-conscious tourists. The research contributes to identifying best practices for utilizing digital tools to foster sustainable tourism and community engagement.

This study proposes a conceptual framework that underlines the expansion of sustainable agricultural tourism, demonstrating how a connected ecosystem can support a community-driven, integrated approach to agro-tourism management. The results were expected to underscore the necessity of a collaborative network strategy that includes all stakeholders. Such collaboration is vital for harmonizing tourism development with the preservation of the region's sustainability and authenticity. Marketers can leverage this cooperative framework to develop strategies that highlight the unique characteristics of specific locales, thereby enhancing the economic, social, and cultural potential of agro-tourism. For governmental entities, recognizing the latent potential of agro-tourism and the importance of community sustainability is essential for effective policy-making and support.

The proposed conceptual framework underscores the expansion of sustainable agricultural tourism through a connected ecosystem that supports a community-driven, integrated approach to agro-tourism management.

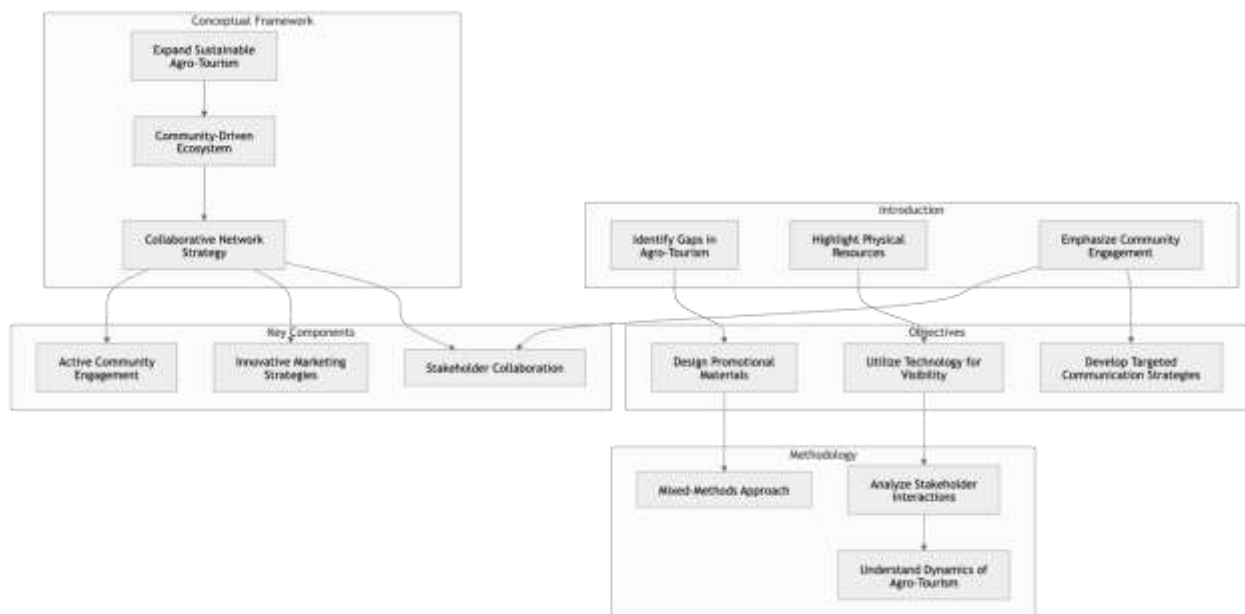


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the strategic plan to address the gaps in agro-tourism development in Nong Kung Si District, Kalasin Province. It emphasizes the importance of not only physical resources but also innovative media that can spark interest and encourage visitation. The study highlights the critical role of community engagement in sustaining agro-tourism and proposes a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders. By leveraging technology and targeted communication strategies, this research aims to enhance the visibility and appeal of agricultural tourism, ultimately fostering sustainable practices and community involvement.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the impact of the collaborative design and implementation of the media promoting agricultural and cultural tourism,
- To assess tourist satisfaction levels regarding the promotional strategies employed for agricultural tourism, identifying key factors that influence their perceptions and experiences.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to identify best practices for utilizing digital tools in fostering sustainable tourism and community engagement. By analyzing the interactions among stakeholders and their contributions to agro-tourism, the research aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. It was designed with three main objectives: creating public relations media, evaluating its effectiveness, and assessing tourist satisfaction. The methodology involved several key phases.

Phase 1: Engaging Students The project engaged sixteen students from various educational levels through workshops organized by the Media Club. These workshops aimed to enhance their skills in creating promotional media for agricultural tourism in the district.

Workshops Included:

- *Promotional Media Production:* focused on creating media specifically for agricultural tourism.
- *Digital Media Production with Canva:* taught students how to produce engaging online content.
- *Video Editing with Capcut:* equipped students with skills to edit videos for YouTube promotions.

Phase 2: Research and Planning The team began by researching the area to understand existing resources. They then proposed plans to enhance the site's appeal as an agro-tourism destination. This collaboration involved various teams working on projects such as:

- *Smart Hydroponic Vegetable Farm*
- *Smart Oyster Mushroom Cultivation System*
- *Young Guide at Jinda*

Digital Media Creation: The team produced video clips showcasing local activities and shared them on YouTube. They also organized events on Facebook to engage the community and attract potential tourists. One notable event was a logo design competition for the hydroponic farm, which involved local parents, residents, and students voting for their favorite designs.

Phase 3: Stakeholder Collaboration The study recognized the importance of stakeholder interconnectivity in promoting regional development. It explored the role of cooperation among stakeholders in managing sustainable agribusiness. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed after watching YouTube clips, involving 32 participants, including government officials, farmers, traders, enterprise owners, and tourists.

Research Findings

Data was collected through a questionnaire. The research findings are divided into two main sections. The results of the impact of the collaborative design and implementation of the media promoting agricultural and cultural tourism are based on the questionnaires responded to by stakeholders. It was found that agricultural activities and groups, such as farmers and fishers, received funding from Kalasin Province to improve infrastructure, making it more suitable for agro-tourism. However, the main challenge identified was the lack of modern media and technology to promote agro-tourism effectively. To address this, the researchers collaborated in designing and creating promotional materials. This included organizing a logo design contest and naming the hydroponic vegetable garden at Jindasinthawanon School as part of the "Agro-Tourism Promotion" project in Nong Kung Si District.

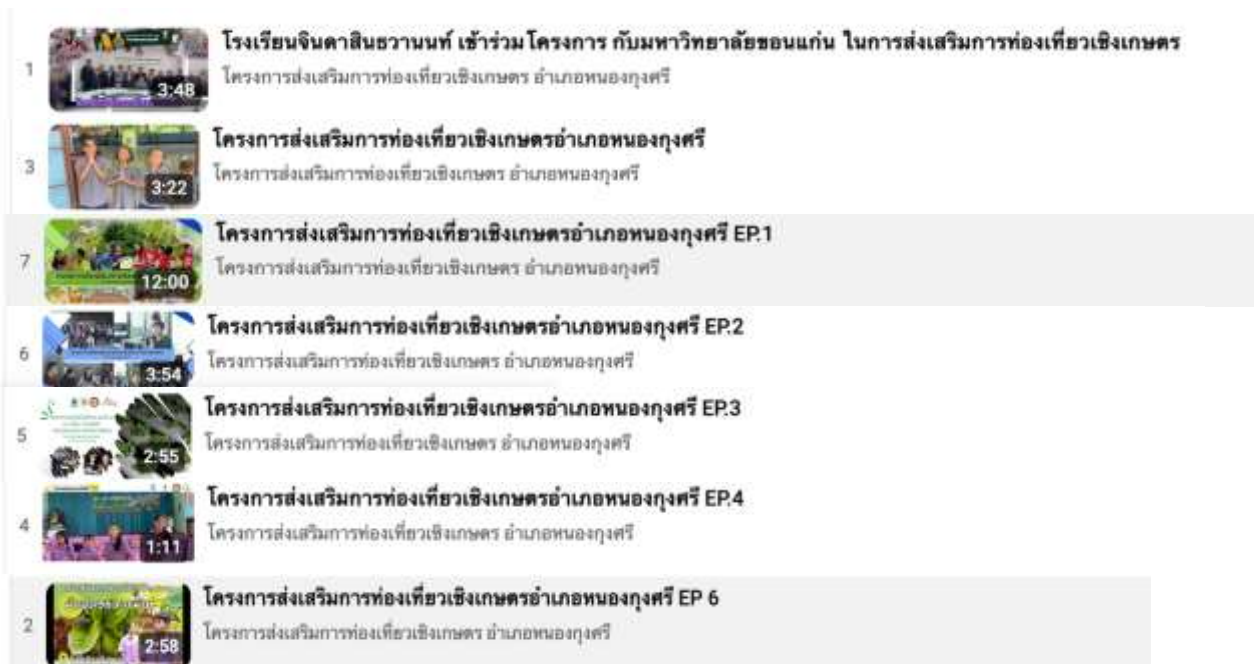


Figure 2. The Promotional Media Broadcast on Youtube

The study assessed the quality of the promotional media, particularly video content, aimed at enhancing agro-tourism in Nong Kung Si District

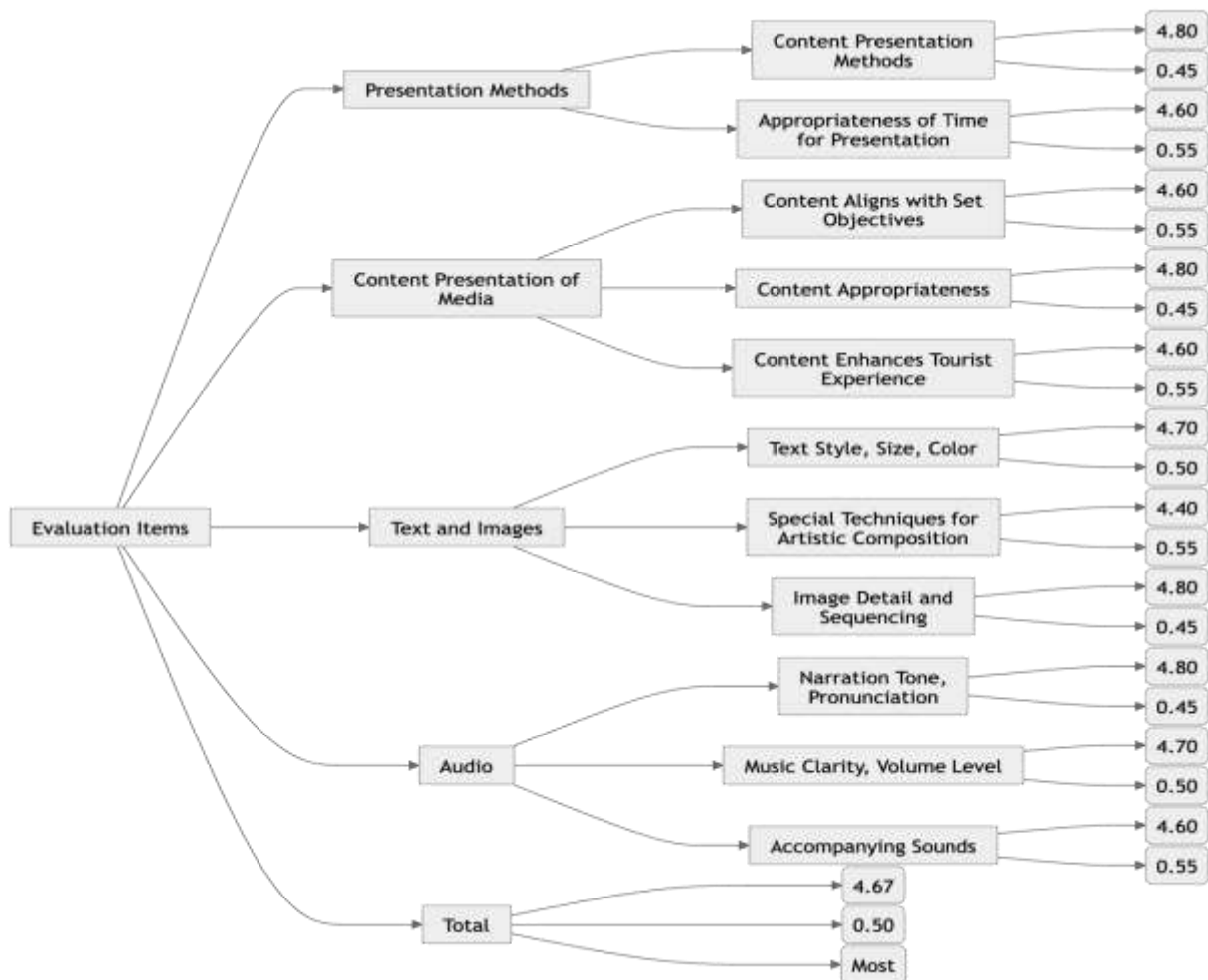


Figure 3. The Results of The Effectiveness of The Digital Media Content

The diagram serves as a visual representation of the framework used to evaluate the effectiveness of the digital media content in promoting the Agro-Tourism project. The diagram categorizes the evaluation items into four main areas: presentation methods, content presentation of media, text and images, and audio. The experts rated the suitability of the digital promotional media elements at a very high level ($\bar{x} = 4.67$, S.D. = 0.50). The highest scores are the content presentation methods, and image detail and sequencing (4.80). This indicates a strong emphasis on effective content delivery and visual clarity which shows the alignment of content with objectives and enhancing the audience's experience. However, the lowest rated item is special techniques for artistic composition (4.40), suggesting it is less prioritized compared to other criteria. Thus, the artistic composition techniques appear to be less emphasized, highlighting a possible area for improvement in future evaluations.

The Results of The Tourist Satisfaction

Over the span of two months, the promotional media for Nong Kung Si's agricultural tourism initiative, presented in YouTube video clips, garnered over 788 views collectively. The videos received multiple comments from viewers, many of whom expressed that they were unaware of this initiative or the hidden tourism potential of the region. Some left complimentary remarks, noting their eagerness to visit the area, while others asked for details on how to travel to Nong Kung Si.

The research investigated tourist satisfaction with the public relations media promoting agricultural tourism in Nong Kung Si District, Kalasin Province. Overall satisfaction was rated as high ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.67$).

- *Mobile Phone Use for QR Code Scanning:*
Tourists expressed high satisfaction with the ease and speed of accessing information via QR codes linked to Facebook and LINE groups ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.60$).
- *Social Media Effectiveness:*
Both Facebook and LINE provided accurate, up-to-date information, with continuous updates on new activities. Tourists appreciated the ability to quickly share, like, and comment ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.66$).
- *Video Quality:*
The promotional videos, with high-quality visuals and audio, were also well-received. Tourists found the storytelling engaging and effective ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.67$).

Technological and Promotional Advances

As part of the study on Nong Kung Si's agricultural tourism initiative, comments posted under promotional video clips were analyzed to identify recurring themes and sentiments. The engagement with these clips highlights public interest and perceptions regarding the initiative.

Key Aspects of Satisfaction That Were Rated the Highest

- *Convenience and Speed of Accessing Information* through mobile QR code scanning, linking to Facebook and LINE groups ($\bar{x} = 4.58$, $S.D. = 0.60$).
- *Accuracy and Responsiveness of Social Media Information* provided through Facebook and LINE, including timely updates and the ability to interact through likes, shares, and comments ($\bar{x} = 4.58$, $S.D. = 0.66$).
- *Quality of Video Content* in terms of both visuals and audio, and the storytelling quality ($\bar{x} = 4.50$, $S.D. = 0.67$).

For the evaluation of customer satisfaction with various media and engagement strategies, including printed media, social media, and video content. The assessment focuses on specific criteria relevant to the effectiveness and convenience of these channels. The following table provides the detailed satisfaction evaluation results:

Criteria	\bar{x}	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Design of Printed Media (brochures, posters)	4.90	0.30	Very High
2. Convenience of QR Code Scanning	4.80	0.45	Very High
3. Completeness of Facebook Page Content	4.78	0.46	Very High
4. Social Media Responsiveness and Interaction	4.72	0.50	Very High
5. Video Content Quality	4.66	0.48	High
6. Effectiveness of Live Video Events in Engagement	4.64	0.56	High

The evaluation demonstrates a high level of satisfaction across all criteria. The highest ratings were given for the design of printed media, with an average score of 4.90, indicating that the materials are highly effective and well-received. Similarly, the ease of QR code scanning and completeness of Facebook content also scored very high. Social media responsiveness and video content were rated slightly lower but still performed strongly, scoring in the "High" and "Very High" ranges.

Comments Overview

The collected comments reflect a positive reception towards Nong Kung Si's offerings, showcasing excitement and curiosity among potential visitors. Below are notable excerpts from the comments.

Interest in Scenery and Travel Plans

- "I had no idea Nong Kung Si had such beautiful scenery! I can't wait to plan a trip there with my family. 🌿 ✨"
- This comment indicates a strong interest in the natural beauty of the area, suggesting that the visuals in the clips effectively captured attention.

Awareness and Information Seeking

- "This video really opened my eyes to the hidden gems in the region. Thank you for sharing! How do I get there?"
- Commenters express a newfound awareness of the region, indicating that the promotional content successfully highlighted previously unknown attractions.

Cultural Engagement

- "Wow, I'm so impressed by the agricultural practices showcased in the video. I'd love to learn more about the local culture when I visit!"
- This reflects a desire for deeper engagement with local culture, suggesting that educational aspects of the initiative resonate with the audience.

Inquiry about Tours

- "I've never heard of this initiative before, but it looks amazing! Are there any guided tours available?"
- The inquiry about guided tours indicates a demand for structured experiences, which could enhance visitor engagement.

Travel Logistics

- "Great video! I'm excited to explore Nong Kung Si. Can someone share the best way to travel there from the city?"
- This comment highlights the need for practical travel information, suggesting that providing logistical details could further facilitate visitor planning.

Potential tourists seem enthusiastic and interested in visiting the area, stressing its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage, based on the comments left. Numerous readers conveyed enthusiasm about organizing their travel plans, demonstrating how well-crafted promotional material may pique interest and raise knowledge of sights that were previously unknown. However, there is a need for immersive experiences that link tourists with local customs and practices, as evidenced by the need for cultural engagement and questions regarding guided tours. Furthermore, the requirement for workable travel logistics implies that offering thorough information may further improve tourist pleasure. All things considered, these findings highlight how crucial it is to use smart marketing to raise awareness of and participation in agrotourism projects.

Discussion

The collaboration between Jinda Sinthawanon School, local leaders, and private sectors exemplifies a model of participatory development that can be replicated in other rural areas. The project's focus on improving yield through technology, while simultaneously investing in human capital through education, highlights a balanced approach to economic development. Furthermore, the enhanced visibility through online media ensures that the benefits of these innovations extend beyond the local community, inviting national and international visitors to participate in Nong Kung Si's unique agricultural tourism experiences.

Key Components of the Framework for Agro-Tourism Development

To effectively address the existing gaps in agro-tourism, it is crucial to focus on the development of both physical resources and innovative media that can attract visitors. This study highlights the importance of significant community engagement as a foundational element for sustaining agro-tourism.

Stakeholder Collaboration

As the study engaged all relevant parties—including local farmers, government entities, and educational institutions, a unified approach to agro-tourism development was created. Thus, the collaboration among these stakeholders fosters a sense of shared responsibility and ownership, which is vital for the long-term success of agro-tourism initiatives. As all parties work together, stakeholders can leverage their unique strengths and resources to create a more attractive and sustainable tourism environment.

Innovative Marketing Strategies

Utilizing digital media and technology is key to promoting the unique characteristics of the region (Homhual et al., 2024). Innovative marketing strategies can help highlight local attractions, culture, and agricultural practices, thereby attracting more visitors. The integration of technology in marketing not only enhances visibility (Sulistiani & Syarifuddin, 2024) but also allows for targeted outreach to potential tourists who are interested in agro-tourism experiences (Ngamchaleaw, B et al., 2023).

Community Engagement

Active involvement of local communities in tourism initiatives is essential for preserving the

region's sustainability and authenticity. When community members participate in the planning and execution of agro-tourism projects, they ensure that the initiatives reflect their cultural values and environmental priorities. This engagement not only enriches the tourist experience but also strengthens community ties and promotes local pride.

Policy Support

Support from governmental entities is critical in recognizing the potential of agro-tourism and the importance of community sustainability in effective policy-making. By developing policies that encourage collaboration among stakeholders and provide resources for community engagement, governments can create an enabling environment for agro-tourism to flourish. This support can take the form of training programs, infrastructure development, and financial incentives, all of which are necessary for fostering a vibrant agro-tourism sector.

In summary, the interplay of stakeholder collaboration, innovative marketing strategies, community engagement, and policy support forms a comprehensive framework for transforming rural areas into successful agro-tourism destinations. Each component is interdependent, and their collective implementation can lead to sustainable development that benefits both the community and the tourism sector.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant potential of interconnected digital media strategies in enhancing agro-tourism in the Nong Kung Si District of Kalasin Province. The study fostered collaboration among local stakeholders—including educational institutions, government entities, and private sectors. This research highlights how a unified approach can effectively leverage digital platforms to promote agricultural tourism. The findings reveal that strategic public relations efforts not only improve tourist satisfaction but also engage target audiences more effectively, thereby driving sustainable tourism development. The emphasis on community engagement and the utilization of innovative marketing techniques further demonstrate the importance of interconnectivity in this context. It is clear that collaborative communication strategies can elevate agro-tourism, making it a viable economic driver for rural areas.

Further research on enhancing agro-tourism elsewhere should focus on longitudinal studies that could assess the long-term impacts of digital media strategies on tourist satisfaction and community development. In addition, comparative analyses with other rural regions could identify best practices, while investigations into digital literacy among stakeholders could inform targeted training programs. Additionally, qualitative research on visitor experiences could provide deeper insights into marketing strategies. Evaluating existing policy frameworks and exploring the adoption of emerging technologies would also be valuable. Lastly, studies on community engagement models and environmental impacts would help ensure sustainable tourism development. These directions will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of agro-tourism potential through interconnected digital media strategies.

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