

Herbal Garden Tourism Development In Thailand: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to study species of herbs and their properties to develop a tourism site in Baan Nai Wang, Baanna Sub-district, Srinakarin District, Phatthalung Province, present healthy food menus for tourists that use local raw ingredients, and develop an herbal garden tourism handbook for the Songkhla Lake Basin. Data were collected through a field survey, focus group discussions involving stakeholders, and in-depth interviews with herbal experts. The study found that there are two private vegetables and herbal gardens and one public area suitable for tourism sites. Thirty-three species of herbs are used for cooking, 17 species of herbs are used for curing disease, and 5 healthy food menus use local herbs as ingredients. We found that the area should be developed as a tourism destination for visitors to learn more about herbal species and herbal properties and to cure diseases using herbs.

Keywords: Herbal Tourism; Herbal Properties; Thailand Herbs; Thailand Tourism; Health Tourism

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide change in tourist consumption behavior has broadly impacted all types of tourism. In the past, tourists visited natural attractions such as seas, waterfalls, mountains, and caves in order to observe natural phenomena and manmade tourism sites such as Buddhist temples, castles, palaces, and other historic sites. As people became richer and transportation improved (Galvani 2005), tourists have changed their preferences. They also need to know more community information and increase site management, including sharing the benefits of tourism. Alternative tourism (D'mello 2008), such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, health tourism, gastronomic tourism, and rural tourism has caught tourists' attention. In addition, tourists are concerned about diseases from tainted foods or poor sanitary conditions. Herbs are used for many purposes including eating, treating, smoking, massaging, etc. Herbs have a longstanding reputation in India as a rejuvenator, helping concentration, and memory improvement. Herbal foods provide nutrients to cure or treat injury or disease. Plenty of healthy herbs have been grown in rural areas for many centuries. Thus, most of the raw ingredients used to cook and treat illness are the product of local wisdom, making rural areas a source of natural, cultural, and local wisdom (Ratanakomut, 2006).

Rural tourism is tourism that takes place in the countryside (Upadhyay, 2008; MacDonald, 2003; Hargreaves, 2002). Because of the stress and strain of modern urban life, many people are turning to the countryside for peace and rest. The charms of agriculture and farming attract visitors to farms. Buying and ownership of a second home in rural areas has become increasingly popular for urban dwellers as a result of increased income, more leisure time and the wish to escape from the pressure of urban life, making agro-tourism popular these days. However, rural areas are not only the pure sites for resident but also for large agricultural production lines. It is also an important place from which to learn about farming. Hence, travelling in rural areas creates a wonderful experience for tourists. In 2010, researchers conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with farmers in Baan Nai Wang (BNW.), Baanna Sub-district, Srinakarin District, Phatthalung Province about locating herbal species and their properties to develop future tourism sites.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research is to study herbal species and their properties and to develop tourism sites in Thailand, and to present healthy food menus for tourists using local raw ingredients.

METHODOLOGY

The area of study is the Baanna Sub-district, Srinakarin District, Phatthalung Province that is located in a mainstream forest close to the Bantad Mountain range. It is a part of the Songkhla Lake Basin, which is the largest lake in Thailand (Ratanachai 2005), so the area has tourism resources and both natural and cultural destinations. The study site is shown in Figure 1. In-depth interviews with the people in the village, herbal garden owners, local government organizations, village leaders, and tourism entrepreneurs were conducted. A focus group discussion about the involvement tourism organizations, villagers, village leader, national tourism organizations, and the community-based tourism network in Songkhla Lake Basin was also conducted to identify a tourism model for learning about herb species, their properties, and activities design.

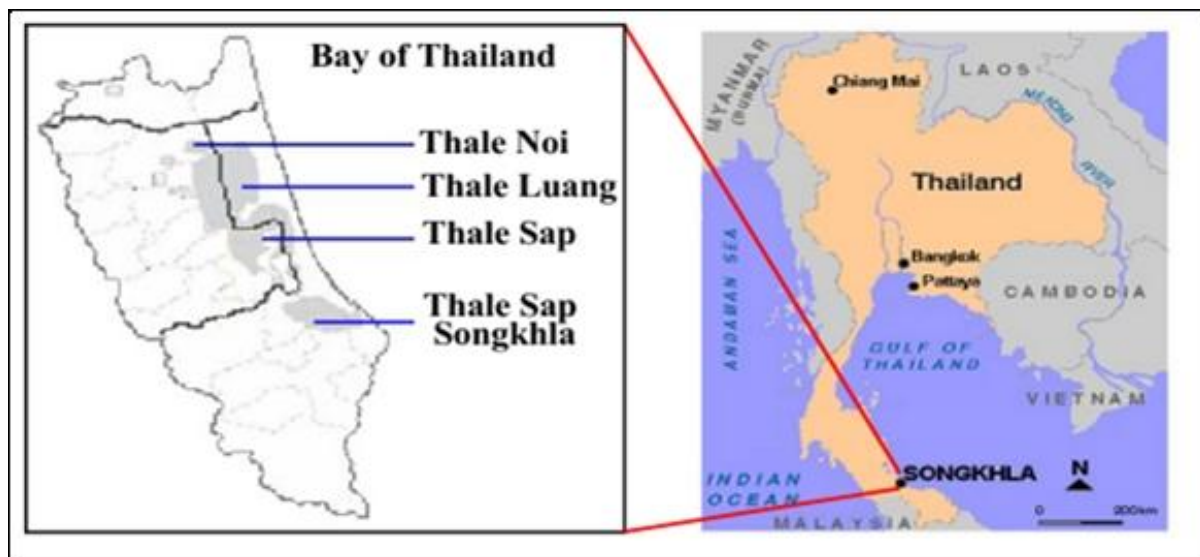


Figure 1

RESULT

Farm Surveys

The people in BNW grow their vegetables and herbs in home gardens intentionally even though some of them grow naturally in the countryside. Most vegetables and herbs are used for cooking. However, two large herbal gardens and one public area growing herbs were found in the BNW community. Firstly, Mr. Jai Chouynui grows herbs in the approximately 10 acres around his house. Secondly, Mr. Praon Dinduang owns a 20-acre herb garden. The gardens were well taken care of by continuous weeding rather than chemical herbicides. The herbs are watered and fertilized systematically. Most of the products are sold to others. The last garden, which is located in a public area close to the canal and mountains, allows local people to freely collect herbs. Vegetables and herbs for cooking and herbs for curing are found in those gardens.

Herbs used for cooking.

Most herbs are used daily for cooking in curry, soup, and stir fry, and some can be eaten without cooking. These 33 species (scientific name) are as follows: 1) *Melieth suaveis* Pierre, 2) *Claoxylon longoifoslium* (Bl) Enbl, 3) *Chlorophyllum brunneum*, 4) *Garcinia cowa*, 5) *Homalomena rostrata* criff, 6) *Antidesma velutinsum* Blume, 7) *Clausena cambodiana* Guill, 8) *Piper nigrum* Linn (Pepper), 9) *Ppr sylvaticum*, 10) *Gnetum gnemon* Linn. var. *tenerum* Markgr, 11) *Cinnamomum porrectum* (Roxb.) Kosterm, 12) *Polyscias* sp, 13) *Etingera elatior* (Jack) R.M. Smith, 14) *Citrus aurantifolia* swing (common lime), 15) *Disoscorea membranacea* Pierre, 16) *Cephaelis griffithii* Hook.f, 17) *Canarium subulatum* Guill, 18) *Kyllinga brevifolia* rottb, 19) *Parkia speciosa* Hassk, 20) *F. racemosa* L., 21) *Cymbopogon Citratus* (DC.ex Nees) Stapf. (Lemon Grass), 22) *Coriandrum sativum* Linn. (Coriander), 23) *Curcuma Longa* Linn. (Turmeric), 24) *Boesenbergia pundurata* Holtt, 25) *Urceola Rosea* (Hook) Sam D.J. Middleton, 26) *Citrus hystrix* Dc. (kaffir Lime), 27) *Piper sarmentosum*, 28) *Plumbago rosea* Linn, 29) *Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn var. *yarrabense* Domin, 30) *Ficus botryocarpa* Miq, 31) *Solanum torvum* Sw.(Pea Eggplant), 32) *Tiliacora triandra diels*, and 33) *Litsea petiolata* Hook.f.

Herbs used for curing properties

The 17 species of herbs with curing properties found in two private gardens and one public area were as follows: 1) *Hippeastrum johnsonii* Bury (relieves asthma symptoms and thirst); 2) *Xyphidium caeruleum* Aubl (properties that nourish blood and provide energy); 3) *Lepionurus sylvestris* Bl., (Orexigenic and stimulus properties); 4) *Cinnamomum thailandica* Kosterm. (properties for Orexigenic and diarrhea); 5) *Podocarpaceae* (its bark can cure renopathy disease); 6) *Goniothalatamus macrophyllus* (properties that nourish blood and relieve back pain); 7) *Priesodielsia desmoide (craib) steenis* (properties for analeptic, nourishment. and blood tonic for women); 8) *Gmelina philippensis* Cham. (properties for in curing malaria); 9) *Jatropha podagrica* (properties for nourishing bone and tendons, analeptic, and for curing paresis and paralysis); 10) *Peltophorum pterocarpum* Back. Ex Heyne (used to treat furuncle and pus); 11) *Latania longtraiodes* (Gaertn.) (used to treat malnutrition); 12) *Piper ribesoides* wall (properties for nourishing blood and bones and relieving waist pain, stomachaches, and cough); 13) *Curculigo latifolia*, *Duyand* (used to treat anti-inflame and as a cordial); 14) *Alacia Chinensis* L (properties for nourishing blood and bones and relieving pains and aches); 15) *Rauwenhoffia siamensis* (used as an anti-inflammatory and as a cordial); 16) *Alstonia macrophylla* wall. ex G. Don (properties for nourishing bone and relieving pains and aches in the back and waist); and 17) *Calabura* (used to reduce hypertension, treat diabetes, and to heal wounds.

The healthy food menus cooked by Ingredient in BNW

The data collected from focus group discussions with stakeholders found that the BNW people used the herbs grown in their community for cooking and five foods are used by local people for their health. These 5 dishes are as follows:

- Mixed vegetable soup. Ingredients: *Melieth suaveis* Pierre., *Tiliacora triandra diels.*, *Coriandrum sativum* Linn. (Coriander), and *Homalomena rostrata* criff.
- Hot curry. Ingredients: *Claoxylon longoifoslium* (Bl) Enbl., *Homalomena rostrata* criff., *Cymbopogon Citratus* (DC.ex Nees) Stapf. (Lemon Grass), *Trus aurantifolia* swing (common lime), and *Piper nigrum* Linn. (Pepper)
- Sour soup with pork, fish and chicken. Ingredients: *Garcinia cowa* and *Antidesma velutinsum* Blume
- Herbal mixed rice. Ingredients: *Clausena cambodiana* Guill, *Brunneum*, *Antidesma velutinsum* Blume, *Piper nigrum* Linn, *Ppr sylvaticum*, *Cinnamomum porrectum* (Roxb.) Kosterm., *Etingera elatior* (Jack) R.M. Smith, *Urceola Rosea* (Hook) Sam D.J. Middleton, and *Garcinia cowa*
- Frying. Ingredients: *Disoscorea membranacea* Pierre.

CONCLUSION

Herbal gardens are both resources for generating income for villagers and learning centers for the public. With the changes in world tourism and tourist behavior, herbal gardens can provide an education to tourists on the

vast array of herbal properties. Some kinds of herbs can also be used to cook healthy foods. Tourism and learning centers can conserve local wisdom and make the local inhabitants take pride in their community, especially herbal gardeners. Moreover, tourists can take herbal knowledge home to adapt into their lives.

RECOMMENDATION

The challenge for herbal gardeners is maintaining gardening standards and providing correct and useful herbal information to tourists. Meanwhile, government organizations that work to develop and promote herbal growing and tourism should integrate value and conservation. Herbal garden development for tourism in BNW is a new possibility for Phatthalung's tourism because it has the potential to develop a specific identity to serve a new current tourism trend. Therefore, involved organizations at all levels should pay attention to herbal tourism. The herbal gardens are not only education centers and disease treatment resources; they are also an important source of healthy food. If the involved organizations study and plan the value of herbs being found in BNW systematically, the location will be found to be appropriate for development as a community hospital by using the herbs in the village to cure patients. It will encourage herbal gardeners, employment, and also reduce medicine and services from general hospitals or clinics. The tourism signs, herbal handbook for tourism, local guide training, and home-stay development are the basic needs that the involved organizations should account for when proposing a budget to support this plan.

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