

Residents' Attitudes towards impacts of traditional bullfighting in Southern Provinces of Thailand

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Abstract— *Traditional bullfighting in Southern parts of Thailand plays an important role in promoting the city and becoming one of the tourist attractions. This is not only a sport tourism among the animal fighting, but also a sport for the crowd in terms of gambling. Even though the events have attracted many domestic tourists, stimulating local economies, the government is losing support among residents. This paper examines the perceived attitudes of residents toward the impacts of traditional bullfighting in Southern parts of Thailand. To identify the respondents of the study, a simple random sampling technique was used to collect data were collected through a survey from 388 residents in 4 Southern provinces: Songkhla, Trang, Nakorn Sri Thammarat, and Phatthalung who lived nearby traditional bullfighting' facilities. Implications for future tourism planning and development, well-being of the society, and provincial government are recommended.*

Keywords: *residents' attitudes, impact of tourism, traditional bullfighting, Thailand.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered an important factor for local economic development, which provides tremendous economic opportunities for the host community, especially in places where people have limited livelihood options. Bullfighting is a big business that expanded due to residents and local tourist demand and, although it is controversial, it is still a tourist attraction (Toti, 2011). Bullfighting, which attracts a lot of tourists, is currently held in some Latin American countries, such as Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Costa Rica, and in southern France, Portugal, and outside Spain (without the bull being killed). Traditional bullfighting in Southern parts of Thailand plays an important role in promoting the city and becoming one of tourist attraction. This form of fighting is nothing like the bullfighting of Latin America or Southern Europe. Here, there is more of the male Water Buffalo. The event is not recognized widely throughout the country, the largest events are held almost every weekend, especially over the traditional public holidays of Thai New Year (the festival is called "Songkran"). This is not only a sport among the animals, but also a sport for the crowd in terms of gambling.

The study aims to determine residents' attitudes on traditional bullfighting and perceived tourism impacts were also studied to identify possible reasons for the change in tourism attitudes. The study will help to initiate tourism development practical implications for tourism policy, event organizers, and provincial government to support and encourage the integration of residents into the process of tourism development and therefore, improve their attitude toward tourism which ultimately enhances tourism in the region.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Traditional bullfighting

Due to the intense competition among destinations in recent years, the development and organization of events such as festivals have become a major sector (Tayfun & Arslan, 2013). Festivals organized in regions lacking natural tourism resources, such as sea, mountains, lakes, forests, etc., are seen as an important means of attracting tourists to the region. Within all cultural values, bullfighting festivals are considered a sport, a folklore, culture, and tourism event and provide various benefits; the extension of the tourism season and the diversification of tourism, ensuring that the tourism demand is evenly distributed among different destinations within the country to enhance destination attractiveness and awareness of destinations, creating new infrastructure services or to develop existing infrastructure, creating powerful and active images and creating cultural themes (Tayfun & Arslan, 2013).

A traditional sport in the Southern provinces of Thailand. Chon Wua (or Thai-style bullfighting) is a contact sport that creates a hierarchy between fighting bulls as it reveals which bull is more dominant through power and aggression. The fighting bulls use their body strength and aggression to reveal the status of who is more dominant through this form of entertainment. The owners of these fighting bulls take good care of their prize possessions as they spend and commit to an endless amount of time catering to the bulls before, during, and after the fight. Before the grand fight, owners and trainers devote their time, energy, and money to extensively training the bull. During this year they will exercise, train, pair, and practice several times during a given period. This traditional sport intertwines the social economic culture of Thailand in a way that reveals a way of life and opportunity for those selling goods and services and for those who own and train

fighting bulls.

B. Perceived Residents’ Attitudes

The impacts of tourism began in the early 1970s and continued to increase in the 1980s (when some negative impacts began to be felt in several destinations). On another hand, the subject “The residents’ perceptions about the impacts of tourism” has been of interest in an increasing number of academic studies also since the 1970s (e.g., Ap, 1992; Gursoy et al., 2019). The main reason is the increasing awareness of the positive and the adverse effects of tourism development at a local level (Gursoy et al., 2019; Ko & Stewart, 2002). The negative impacts of tourism are perceived mainly in urban destinations, or it can be found at places where there is shared use of the interurban structures among domestic and international tourists. Such places are recognized as having various facilities shared by different types of users, and they can be classified as tourist and non-tourist (Ashworth, 2009).

Therefore, it is essential to understand the combination of factors that influence residents’ attitudes and condition the degree to which they evaluate positive or negative impacts. In examining residents’ attitudes, it is also important to highlight certain aspects such as the type and degree of interaction between residents and tourists, the importance of the industry for the community, the level of visitor involvement with the tourism sector, and the general level of development of the host community (Murphy, 2013). In addition to these general factors, other more specific factors should also be considered such as having been born in the community (Um & Crompton, 1987), the length of time an individual has lived in the community (Liu & Var, 1986), age and educational level (Allen et al., 1993), and the distance between place of residence and tourism activities (Sheldon & Var, 1984). Many researchers also have argued that the development of tourism in the country should ensure the freedom of expression of the residents (Ming, Geoffrey, & Min, 2016) as the views of the residents may be taken as reference in tourism decision-making, tourism planning, and to tourism intervention which includes the protection of scarce resources and promotion of traditional culture (Dai et al., 2017).

III. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire consists of two parts: (a) demographic characteristics were gender, age, and provinces of residence (Haley, Snaith, & Miller, 2005) and (b) the second part of the questionnaire investigated residents' attitudes towards traditional bullfighting benefits and costs of impacts. This part contained 20 items adapted from the study of Choi & Murray (2010), Gursoy et al., (2016), Ko & Stewart (2002), and Nunkoo & Gursoy (2012). The level of respondents’ attitudes is measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree to the given statement.

The primary data have been collected from the residents of Songkhla, Trang, Nakorn Sri Thammarat, and Phatthalung which are the most famous destinations of traditional bullfighting. A simple random sampling method was used to collect responses from residents through a well-structured questionnaire. The survey has been done from April to September 2023. The required sample according to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula is 388 from the total households of 40,760 of the four destinations. From each household one member, age 18 or above, was interviewed.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Residents’ Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the residents from 4 Southern provinces: Songkhla, Trang, Nakorn Sri Thammarat, and Phatthalung comprise the study sample. It is shown that 94% of the respondents are male whereas, the remaining 6% of respondents are female. The sample of the study comprises primarily people (over 87% of the respondents are aged over 44, while over 23% are aged 44 and under) and residential provinces (more than 65% have been living in that place for over 20 years).

B. Residents’ Attitudes Toward Impacts of Traditional Bullfighting

Respondents were given different statements to rate their attitudes toward the impacts of traditional bullfighting in their regions and the results are reported in Table 1. The results reveal that in the case of the economic impact of tourism, the majority of respondents tend to agree that traditional bullfighting brings economic benefits only to a small group of people (Mean = 4.72). The respondents further reported that prices of services and real estate have increased significantly because of traditional bullfighting (Mean = 4.36) and the living standard of the local populace is positively influenced by traditional bullfighting (Mean = 4.34) and traditional bullfighting attracts more investment (Mean = 4.17).

In terms of the perceived environmental impact of traditional bullfighting, the highest mean value (4.57) was observed for the statement, “Traditional bullfighting results in unpleasantly crowded and inaccessible places during the high season” followed by “Traditional bullfighting greatly adds to traffic congestion” (Mean = 4.24) and “increase in infrastructure and other public facilities” followed by (Mean = 4.23) whereas the lowest mean (3.78) was observed for “Traditional bullfighting increases noise pollution.”

Table 1: Residents’ Attitudes on Traditional Bullfighting

Impact	Items	Mean	Std.
Economic	attracts more investments	4.17	0.83
	increased standards of living	4.34	0.87
	increases prices of	4.36	1.52

	services and real estate		
	brings economic benefits only to a small group of people	4.72	0.38
	creates more jobs for external than for local people in the region	3.90	1.36
	increases employment opportunities for residents	4.10	0.47
Impact	Items	Mean	Std.
Environment	provides conservation of natural resources	4.17	0.69
	increases in infrastructure and other public facilities	4.23	0.97
	results in unpleasantly crowded and inaccessible places during the high season	4.57	0.98
	adds to traffic congestion	4.24	0.97
	increases noise pollution	3.78	1.56
	increases litter	4.07	0.85
	increases conflicts over land use	4.13	0.69
	increases natural degradation	4.20	0.83
	leads maintenance and protection of environmental assets	4.22	1.24
Socio-cultural	influences the regional culture	4.26	0.69
	supports the preservation of the regional culture	4.38	1.87
	causes security	4.04	1.36
	increases gambling problems	4.69	0.97
	increases drug and alcoholism	3.53	1.93

In terms of the socio-cultural impact of tourism, the highest mean value (4.69) was “increases gambling problems” observed for the statement followed by “supports the preservation of the regional culture” (Mean = 4.38) whereas the lowest “increases drug and alcoholism” (Mean 3.53).

C. Factor Analysis

All the 20 items of four dimensions were appropriate for analysis. The dimensions were (a) positive impacts of bullfighting was loaded with the 4 items: attract more investments, increased standards of living, increases employment opportunities for residents, provides

conservation of natural resources; (b) negative impacts of traditional bullfighting, which had 6 items loaded, increased prices of products, services and real estate, causes gambling problems, increases natural degradation, increases traffic congestion, increases noise pollution, increases litter; (c) public concern had 5 items, increase in infrastructure and other public facilities, results in unpleasantly crowded during the high season, leads maintenance and protection of environmental assets, causes security, increases drug and alcoholism; (d) local concern had 5 items, brings economic benefits only to a small group of people, creates more jobs for external than for local people in the region, increases conflicts over land use, influences the regional culture, and supports the preservation of the regional culture.

Table 2: Factor Analysis of perceived attitudes on the impacts of Traditional Bullfighting

Items	Factor loadings	EV	Variance explained (cumulative variance explained)
Factor 1: Positive impacts of bullfighting			
attracts more investments	0.86	5.24	24.646 (24.646)
increases standards of living	0.84		
increases employment opportunities for residents	0.85		
provides conservation of natural resources	0.85		
Factor 2: Negative impacts of bullfighting			
increases prices of products	0.69	4.26	19.837 (42.854)
increases prices of services and real estate	0.68		
increases gambling problems	0.70		
increases natural degradation	0.68		
increases noise pollution	0.65		
increases litter	0.69		
Factor 3: Public concern			
increases in infrastructure and other public facilities	0.71	2.25	10.152 (72.435)
results in unpleasantly crowded during the high season	0.75		
leads maintenance and	0.75		

protection of environmental assets			
causes security	0.71		
increases drug and alcoholism	0.73		
Factor 4: Local concern			
brings economic benefits only to a small group of people	0.59	3.16	13.379 (56.134)
creates more jobs for external than for local people in the region	0.58		
increases conflicts over land use	0.61		
influences the regional culture	0.63		
supports the preservation of the regional culture	0.63		

D. Regression Analysis

The results of regression analysis are reported in Table 3. The coefficients of all four variables: Positive impacts of bullfighting, Negative impacts of bullfighting, Public concern, and Local concern found to be significant at 1% and 5% and this analysis reveals that residents' attitude has been significantly influenced. It means that residents' attitudes toward tourism depend on their perceived attitude toward the Negative of bullfighting and Local concern about the impact of traditional bullfighting.

Table 3: Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Residents' Attitude)

Independent variable	Coefficient
Constant	-0.04
Positive of bullfighting	0.622
Negative of bullfighting	0.139**
Public concern	0.652
Local concern	0.452*
Age	0.026
Gender	0.145
Province of residence	0.72**
R – Squared	0.40
Adjust R – Squared	0.40
F	11.959

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

However, the coefficients of residents' age and gender are found statistically insignificant indicating that these two variables do not explain the residents' attitude toward traditional bullfighting significantly. The coefficient of the variable "Province of residence" is significant at 1% which explains that it does matter significantly for the resident's

attitude toward traditional bullfighting whether the residents have been living in that place for over or less than 20 years. The overall strength of the model is measured through coefficients of determination (R²) which shows the proportion of variation in the dependent variable (residents' attitude) which is being explained through changes in the independent variables of the model and the value of R² is 0.40 which represents that out of the total variation on the residents' attitude, 40% variation is being explained by all the independent variables together in the model.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of this study support the literature (e.g., Choi & Murray (2010); Gursoy et al., (2016); Ko & Stewart (2002); Nunkoo & Gursoy (2012); Nunkoo & So (2016) that, generally, residents are somewhat ambivalent towards tourism development. Support for traditional bullfighting depends on perceived economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits and costs (Canaday & Zeiger, 1991; Carmichael, 2000). In this study, support for the potential negative impacts is recognized by residents such as increases in prices of products, prices of services, and real estate, gambling problems, natural degradation, traffic congestion, noise pollution, and litter.

Not all residents hold the same perceived attitude. It has been recognized that tourism development is usually justified based on perceived positive and negative impacts. Perceived attitudes are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics (Spears & Boger, 2003), the length and province of residence (Sheldon & Var, 1984), and personal factors (Pizam, 1978; Kwam & McCarthy, 2005). This study found differences in perceived attitudes between provinces of residence, and these need to be taken into consideration for strategic decision-making.

These results affirm that residents are very much concerned about the environmental impact of traditional bullfighting and such "environmental consequences result in unpleasantly crowded and inaccessible places during the high season" will lead to the destruction of tourism in the long run if a proper and sound environmental plan for tourism is not intact. Promoting tourist destinations rarely finds success without the support of residents (App, 1992). If the concern is gaining support for traditional bullfighting, then pro-development campaigns should target citizens who do not work in the events. The focus of these should be how traditional bullfighting will contribute to the working conditions of residents and how socio-cultural impacts such as an "increase in gambling problems" will be managed. Event planners and managers should be sensitive to the environmental concerns of those residents and should communicate what they are doing to minimize the impact of development on the environment to reduce opposition based on environmental concerns.

This analysis reveals that residents perceived that tourism has a significant impact on the regional culture whereas,

comparatively, fewer respondents agree that tourism supports the preservation of the regional culture. The preservation of regional culture must be ensured with the support of the provincial government, local community, and non-governmental organizations working in the region. In the connection, the collaboration of various stakeholders of tourism may be required to introduce a new measurement technique.

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