

The Influence of Event Experience Scale Affecting Satisfaction of Thai Tourists in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024

Khwanruethai Krongyut

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand.

Abstract

This research is a survey the event experience scale of tourists' perceptions to participate in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024 in dimensions of affective engagement, cognitive engagement, physical engagement, and experiencing novelty. Testing the influence of event experience scale on festival satisfaction is an important part of this research. Data were collected using a questionnaire of 400 Thai tourists. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The results found that tourists had the highest level of event experience in terms of affective engagement, followed by physical engagement, experiencing novelty, and cognitive engagement. The event experience scale that influences tourist satisfaction includes affective engagement, experiencing novelty at the statistical significance level of 0.05. However, organizers should create exciting activities, a unique and impressive atmosphere, provide the opportunity to participate in activities to gain a good experience and increase satisfaction in participating in the festival.

Keywords: Event Experience Scale, Satisfaction, Chiang Rai, Festival

1. Introduction

Thailand's tourism industry is continuously expanding in terms of the number of tourists and tourism income. According to the forecast of the Department of Tourism, Thailand will have approximately 67 million tourists in 2030 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2023). Organizing special events is a tool for marketing communication through activities that can attract the attention of target groups and create sales for products and services as well. It can also create a buzz for the public to talk about the activities that take place through creating experiences and interactions in participating in the activities. The image of the organization will be conveyed as the theme of the event, decoration of the venue, and creation of atmosphere within the event (Opaskhajordet, 2016). Currently, the MICE and Event Industry is one of the industries with high growth in Thailand that can continuously create the overall value of the country's tourism industry (Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau, 2019). Thailand has an expansion rate of event organizing up to 5 - 10 %, or worth 12,500 million THB (Chatratichart, 2013). Chiang Rai Province has a policy to drive and promote tourism as a cultural natural and festival tourism destination. Chiang Rai Province, represented by the Provincial Administrative Organization, the City Municipality, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and the private sector, organizes festivals throughout the year, such as flower festivals, cultural festivals, music festivals, and balloon festivals, which are well-known among Thai tourists in Chiang Rai and other provinces. (Tourism Authority of Thailand: Chiang Rai Office, 2023).

One of the most popular and famous festivals in Chiang Rai Province is the ASEAN Flower Festival, which has been held since 2012 until now. Each year, the event is designed differently to present the tourism image of Chiang Rai Province, which combines the beauty of nature, winter flowers, and diverse tribal cultures. In 2024, it will be held under the name of Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024 under the concept of “The Magical Garden” to stimulate the local economy, raise the standard of tourism and allow tourists who travel to Chiang Rai Province to experience the culture and unique identity of Chiang Rai Province and participate in helping the community by supporting local products, resulting in job creation and career creation for the area from sustainable tourism. (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024).

Creating a special experience for festival and event attendees should be a first priority for event organizers (Geus, Richards, & Toepoel, 2016). Excellent event design creates a unique experience for attendees and makes attendees recognize the value and feel involved with the event, which affects their satisfaction with the event and may lead to behavioral intentions to revisit or word of mouth and share experiences with future acquaintances (Santichart & Charoenwisan, 2023). Therefore, this research aims to study the event experience scale of Thai tourists and investigate the influence of event experience scale affecting satisfaction of Thai tourists in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024. The researcher chose to apply the concept of Event Experience Scale by applying the concepts of perception processes, thinking, and emotional in 4 dimensions: affective engagement, cognitive engagement, physical engagement, and experiencing novelty (Coetzee, Lee, & Faisal, 2019). This tool has not been widely used in Thailand. The results will be useful to organizers for planning event strategies, marketing communications strategies, and designing event experiences that are attractive and make attendees have a memorable experience.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Special Event

Goldblatt (1997) defines a special event as a special time of celebration with ceremonies and rituals in order to meet specific needs. While Shone & Parry (2019) view special events as all forms of activities, whether they be recreational activities (leisure events) such as sports, cultural events such as art celebrations or corporate events, organizational events such as activities related to sales, politics, and personal events such as weddings, etc. Therefore, a special event is any type of activity that is designed or created to be an important and memorable event in a well thought out and planned way to serve certain objectives set by the organization. Goldblatt (1997) proposed a special event management process consisting of 5 steps: Research, Design, Planning, Coordination, and Evaluation. Giannini Jr. (2010) proposed guidelines for organizing successful special events, including: 1) select the type of special event carefully by ensuring that the theme of the special event reflects the mission of the organization and the target audience. 2) associate the organization's image with special events because most people attend special events from the topic or event name. Therefore, if the organization can link the event name with the organization, it will create more recognition. 3) engage with attendees of special events by chatting with attendees or creating activities that create as much interaction between attendees as possible. 4) create awareness by using other media in special activities, such as billboards, clothing, so that attendees can be aware of the organization and the organization's participation in that activity. 5) give souvenirs to attendees to reinforce or remind them of your organization or brand. 6) create awareness about special events in advance by communicating them to the mass media or online. 7) create awareness while organizing special

events, such as having the media attend the event or impressing attendees. 8) create awareness after special events by sending news or photos to media or sending thank you messages to attendees.

2.2 Event Experience Scale: EES

Santichart & Charoenwisan (2023) define the concept of Event Experience Scale (EES) is a measure of the experience of event attendees that is applied from related theoretical concepts with the process of perception, thinking, and emotional characteristics that arise from attending events. Measurement of the event experience can be divided into 4 main categories: 1) Affective Engagement is the experience of event attendees that involves feelings, emotions, preferences, and values. 2) Cognitive Engagement is an experience that involves perception, understanding, remembering, learning, judging, and receiving sensory experiences. 3) Physical Engagement is an experience that describes the behavior displayed and various physical activities that happened within the event. 4) Experiencing Novelty is an experience that attendees recognize as being different from other places. There is something new, unique, or it is something that is outside of the daily life of the participants (Coetzee, Lee, & Faisal, 2019). Festivals are considered one type of special event that is important in driving a community's economy, society, and culture. They are an important experiential product that tourists can participate in or observe, which helps differentiate the senses. The imagination and emotions of consumers are also tools to create jobs at the community and regional levels to achieve the goals. The researcher has synthesized dimensions of event experience from related research, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions Event Experience Scale (EES)

Dimensions	Authors
1) Affective Engagement	• Coetzee and Pourfakhimi (2019)
2) Cognitive Engagement	• Coetzee <i>et al.</i> (2019)
3) Physical Engagement	• Geus <i>et al.</i> (2016)
4) Experiencing Novelty	• Hermann <i>et al.</i> (2021)
	• Richards (2017)
	• Richards (2020)
	• Richards <i>et al.</i> (2020)

From Table 1, it can be concluded that designing experiences for festival event attendees needs to present all dimensions in terms of creating emotions, creating sensory experiences, and creating experiences. Learning, creating environments for remembering, and creating activities for unique experiences. This is something organizers need to consider in order to be consistent with the changing needs of tourists in the future. These ways of designing and measuring experiences will help tourists who attend festival events have a memorable travel experience. This affects satisfaction with the event and has the opportunity to create behavioral intentions to revisit or to recommend a good experience to acquaintances in the future.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction comes from the perception of benefits after use, which is considered very important in meeting customer needs (Pham & Ahammad, 2017). Correia, Kozak, & Ferradeira (2013) stated that satisfaction is a quality state or level of satisfaction that results from various interests and attitudes that people have towards those things. Wolman (1989) suggested that satisfaction is the result of an attitude toward individual activities and group relations. Satisfaction is an internal behavior that results from comparing feelings towards a product or service after using the product or receiving a service. Satisfaction can affect

loyalty and confidence in the product and service (Oliver, 2014). Factors affecting service satisfaction include: 1) Providing services equally and equitably 2) Providing services on time and in response to user needs 3) Providing adequate services in various areas, including: building various materials and equipment, as well as service personnel 4) Providing continuous service before using the service, during using the service, and after the service is completed. 5) Providing progressive services or developing services both in terms of quantity and quality (Millet, 2007).

While Meksawat (2007) proposed factors that affect service recipient satisfaction, including 1) service products: must offer quality service products and have a level of service that meets the needs of service recipients or users, with care and sincerity for the quality of service products delivered to service recipients or users. 2) Service fee: it arises from evaluating the quality and style of service compared to the price of services that must be paid. 3) Service location: a place must be easily accessible to service recipients or users, a spacious location, and consideration for facilitating service recipients or users in every aspect. 4) Promoting and recommending services: positive information is provided to service recipients or users in terms of service quality and service image through various media so that service recipients or users can evaluate in order to decide on further purchases of services. 5) Service providers: must be aware of creating satisfaction in the service of users, both by displaying service behavior and presenting services that customers want to pay full attention to with service consciousness. 6) Service environment: create the attractiveness of the building through decorative design, appropriate division of usable space, creating a good image of the service business and communicating this image to service recipients or users. 7) Service process: effectively design service systems to increase agility and the ability to correctly respond to customer needs by bringing together personnel and technology to increase service efficiency and effectiveness. Satisfaction can be measured in 3 ways: observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Questionnaires are a popular method and widely used to measure satisfaction. However, the questionnaire used to measure satisfaction must have clear data collection and be easy to use for data analysis (Savakeviharee, 2017).

3. Research Scope

Scope of content: Study tourist behavior, including travel patterns, information perception about the event, decision to visit, number of times visited and purchase of products at the event. Along with testing the influence of event experience scale (affective engagement, cognitive engagement, physical engagement, and experiencing novelty) affecting satisfaction of Thai tourists in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024

Scope of population: Thai tourists who participated in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024

4. Research Methodology

This research is quantitative research. The population was Thai tourists who attended Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024. A sample size of 400 was calculated by Cochran (1977) and convenience sampling technique was used for data collection. The research instrument was a questionnaire of tourist satisfaction that was examined content validity. The IOC was between 0.67 -1.00 and the reliability was 0.927, which is considered acceptable. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations to study the event experience scale. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the influence of event experience scale affecting satisfaction of Thai tourists in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024.

5. Result

5.1 Demographic and tourist behavior

Most of the respondents were female 48.8%, followed by males 45.3 % and LGBTQ+ 6.0 %, respectively. Ages between 45 - 54 years 27.8 %, followed by 35-44 years 26.8 %, and 25-34 years 17.3 % respectively. Working as employees of private companies 23.3 %, followed by private businesses 19.8 %, and civil servants 19.0 %, respectively. Bachelor's degree 63.5 %, followed by secondary school 14.3 %, and a master's degree 10.8 %, respectively. Average income 10,001 - 50,000 THB 73.5 %, followed by no income 14.8 %, and less than 10,000 THB 7.3 %, respectively. Hometown is in the northern of Thailand 44.5 %, followed by Bangkok 19.5 %, and the central region (excluding Bangkok) 15.8 %, respectively. The respondents came to the festival for the first time 57.5 %, followed by a second time 18.8 %, and more than 3 times 17.8 %, respectively. Traveling with a family group/ relative 49.3 %, followed by with a group of friends 37.0 %, and with a tour group 7.5 %, respectively. Most of them received information about the events from social media 41.5 %, followed by recommended by intimate friend 33.8 %, and others 12.0%, respectively. The reason for deciding to visit is famous festival 32.0 %, followed by intimate friend recommending 24.8 % and want to learn about culture 13.5 %, respectively. Products purchased at the event were tea, coffee 47.5 %, followed by ethnic food 24.3 %, and snacks, compotes/dried food 19.5 %, respectively.

5.2 Event Experience Scale

Respondents had the highest overall level of experience ($\bar{x} = 4.21$, S.D. = 0.54). When considering each dimension, it was found that tourists had the highest level of experience in terms of affective engagement ($\bar{x} = 4.29$, S.D. = 0.50), followed by physical engagement ($\bar{x} = 4.12$ S.D. = 0.48), experiencing novelty ($\bar{x} = 4.06$, S.D. = 0.56), and cognitive engagement ($\bar{x} = 3.11$, S.D. = 1.12) shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Event Experience Scale (EES)

Event Experience Scale	\bar{x}	S.D	Level
1. Affective engagement	4.29	0.50	Highest
1.1 You had positive feelings when you are participating in this festival.	4.31	0.50	Highest
1.2 Participating in this festival makes you feel happy.	4.30	0.50	Highest
1.3 You feel satisfied when you purchase products that express the uniqueness of the tribal culture.	4.27	0.56	Highest
1.4 You feel proud when you have the opportunity to attend this festival.	4.27	0.53	Highest
2. Cognitive engagement	3.11	1.12	Moderate
2.1 Once you join this festival, you don't want to join other festivals.	2.83	1.30	Moderate
2.2 You pay attention and intend to participate in this festival every year.	2.91	1.42	Moderate
2.3 When there is a festival in Thailand, you always think of this festival.	3.60	0.90	High
3. Physical engagement	4.12	0.48	High
3.1 The layout of the festival venue is interesting and attractive.	4.06	0.55	High
3.2 When participating in this festival, you feel comfortable to walking around.	4.14	0.48	High

Event Experience Scale	\bar{x}	S.D	Level
3.3 You feel comfortable and impressed to using the facilities at this festival.	4.16	0.50	High
4. Experiencing novelty	4.06	0.56	High
4.1 The organization of this festival is unique, interesting, and exotic.	4.03	0.57	High
4.2 The festival has distinctive activities/performances that express ethnic identity.	4.15	0.59	High
4.3 You can experience a tribal culture that is different from what you've experienced.	4.01	0.70	High
Overall	4.21	0.54	Highest

5.3 The influence of event experience scale affecting satisfaction of Thai tourists in Chiang Rai ASEAN Flower and Art Festival 2024

The results of multiple regression analysis revealed that affective engagement and experiencing novelty influence tourists' satisfaction as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of multiple regression analysis

Variable (Event experience scale)	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig
Affective Engagement (X_1)	0.307	0.054	0.285	5.687	0.000*
Cognitive engagement (X_2)	0.033	0.024	0.070	1.395	0.164
Physical engagement (X_3)	0.081	0.057	0.073	1.427	0.154
Experiencing novelty (X_4)	0.287	0.049	0.301	5.855	0.000*
Constant	1.293	0.238		5.432	0.000*

Multiple R = .572^a R Square = .327 Adjusted R Square = .320 Std. Error = .044264

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

From Table 3, the multiple correlation coefficient is 0.572, the decision coefficient is 0.327, the adjusted R Square coefficient is 0.320 and the standard error in decision making is 0.044264

The equation can be written as follows $Y = 1.293 + 0.307(X_1) + 0.287(X_4)$

The equation shown that event experience scale in terms of affective Engagement (X_1) increased 1 unit, results in 0.307 units increase of tourists' satisfaction, and 1 unit increase in experiencing novelty (X_4) results in 0.287 units increase of tourists' satisfaction.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

Characteristics of tourists who come to the festival are mostly female, aged between 45 - 54 years, working as a private company employee, Bachelor's degree education, average income 10,001 - 30,000 THB, hometown in the northern of Thailand. This is consistent with Inouchot et al (2022), who studied Satisfaction of Tourist on Jasmin Rice Festival, 21st in Roi-Et Province stated that most of the participants were female, aged 41 years and over, and had a bachelor's degree. As well as the Singburi Provincial Statistical Office (2024) that evaluated the results of the 29th Muang Sing Fish Eating and Good Food Festival found that most of the participants were female, aged between 40-49 years and residing in Sing Buri Province. This may indicate that females may be more interested in participating in annual festivals

and events than males. It is also likely that people aged 40 and over will be interested in attending the festival, which has stalls selling goodies and famous products.

The participants were at a high level of satisfaction. The highest satisfaction was in affective engagement followed by physical engagement, experiencing novelty, and cognitive engagement respectively. This is consistent with Inouchot et al (2022), who said that tourists were satisfied with the 21st Jasmin Rice Festival at a high level which is arranged as follows: product distribution, production and agricultural, facilities, benefits of organizing an event, location, and organizing/activities. However, from the multiple regression, it was found that affective engagement and experiencing novelty affect tourists' satisfaction levels. Therefore, organizers should focus on creating an atmosphere that makes attendees feel part of the event and proud to participate in the festival. In addition, activities should be designed to be attractive, outstanding, unique, and allow attendees to experience the tribal culture. According to Giannini Jr (2010), guidelines for creating a lasting impression in organizing special events include: engaging special event participants through direct and indirect experiences, creating unified awareness throughout the event, such as using billboards clothes with the same symbol logo or concept throughout the event, giving souvenirs to attendees to reinforce or remind them of the event, etc.

7. Recommendations

1. The organizer should set up a photo booth in front of the event and inside the event to create an atmosphere of participating and being a part of the event.
2. Organizers should focus on creating a festival branding that can create awareness among attendees and have a good memory of the event.
3. A variety of activities should be created to provide opportunities for tourists to have unique experiences and truly experience tribal culture, such as games, competitions, demonstrations.

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