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Tourism and Hospitality *Trend*

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Tourism and Hospitality Trends and Analysis: **3rd Quarter 2014**

Introduction

Tourism in Thailand is undergoing a difficult period due to increasing operating costs and declining number of tourists brought about by concerns about the domestic political situation. The number of international tourists declined from 2.2 million in April 2014 to 1.5 million in June 2014, according to the Bank of Thailand. On the contrary, the average room rate has been reduced from 2,560.85 Baht/night in January 2014 to 1,600.68 Baht/night in June 2014, with the lowest hotel occupancy rate of the year so far pegged at 40.68% at the end of June. Clearly, Thailand has to regain tourists' trust and confidence in the areas of safety and quality of destination. Dissemination of more information and conducting more promotions are necessary at this stage to recreate the international tourist demand and prompt travelers to visit and revisit Thailand. Many tourism businesses have high hopes for the coming high season around October onward.

Changes in Tourism Trends

As the results of the low season and domestic political issues, the country has encountered challenge in regard to the number of inbound tourists, especially Chinese tourists who contribute significantly to Thailand's tourism revenues. The short-term visa exemption policy for Chinese and Taiwanese tourists is expected to boost the number of these tourists. This may suggest that tourism businesses may need to rely on domestic tourists for cash flow and that they should launch attractive marketing campaigns to encourage local tourists to travel more in the Kingdom.

For the next phase of tourism infrastructure, the investment and development of the tourism logistic system are regarded as the strategic action that should be taken. The development of new transportation infrastructures, especially in the

railway system, can help ensure the long-term growth of tourism in Thailand. This initiative requires genuine support and commitment of government agencies now and in the future. Thailand should be able to take advantage of its geographical location as the tourism hub of ASEAN.

Moreover, with the continuous expansion of airline routes, especially in the low-cost airline category, more hospitality businesses have been established in the provinces, such as Roi Et and Sakon Nakhon. Shops, restaurants, and hotels can also be further developed to serve the increasing numbers of travelers and tourists. However, additionally, the local tourism authority has to be prepared to create tourism activities to attract visitors to each local destination.

New Tourist Trend

There are two main groups of tourists to watch for in the future: The Generation Y and the senior travelers. With the continuous growth of these two groups and their spending powers, tourism and hospitality operators should pay close attention to serving these groups' changing demands. Members of Generation Y are known for their love for new and unique experiences. They prefer to travel with friends and share their photos and videos through social media. For senior tourists, they travel primarily for relaxation on either short- or long-stay. Slow tourism is the most appropriate form of tourism for this group. Tourism organizations need to understand the new demands of tourists in each of these two groups and must be creative in providing the tourism products and services to meet the expectation of their customers.



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การพัฒนาธุรกิจท่องเที่ยวเชิงวิถีชีวิตชนบท:

กรณีศึกษาศิริหล้าฟาร์ม

(Rural Tourism Development: The Case of Sirila Farm & Tent)

ศิริหล้าฟาร์ม เด่นท์แคมป์ ตั้งอยู่ที่ อ.วังสะพุง จ. เลย เป็นตัวอย่างของธุรกิจท่องเที่ยวที่นำเสนอวิถีชีวิตในชนบทที่ประสบผลสำเร็จในการดึงดูดนักท่องเที่ยวต่างประเทศ โดยใช้ความโดดเด่นของวิถีชีวิตเกษตรกรรมไทยที่เรียบง่ายมาพัฒนาเป็นจุดขายทางการท่องเที่ยว เป็นการต่อยอดในสิ่งที่มีอยู่ในชุมชน และสามารถสร้าง 'คุณค่า' ประสพการณ์ท่องเที่ยวให้กับนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติอย่างแท้จริง

ศิริหล้าฟาร์ม เด่นท์แคมป์ ให้บริการที่พักที่คงความเป็นธรรมชาติเป็นมิตรกับสิ่งแวดล้อม มีการใช้ตะเกียง โคมไฟ และแคมป์ไฟแทนไฟฟ้า ทางฟาร์มได้เพาะปลูกพืชผักผลไม้ปลอดสารพิษ เช่น มะม่วง มะละกอ สับปะรด มะม่วงหินพานต์ กาแฟ และแมคคาเดเมีย ตั้งอยู่ในสภาพธรรมชาติที่งดงาม ไม่แออัดด้วยนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ มีชุมชนเป็นมิตร อภัยาคัยที่ดีต่อแขกผู้มาเยือน มีชีวิตที่เรียบง่าย สงบ เป็นเมืองในชนบทที่น่าอยู่ นำใช้ชีวิต และใช้งบลงทุนทำธุรกิจไม่สูงนัก เพราะสิ่งที่นักท่องเที่ยวต้องการคือ ธรรมชาติ และวิถีชีวิตเกษตรไทยในชนบท ซึ่งเป็นสิ่งที่หาได้ไม่บ่อยนักสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติที่มาจากเมืองใหญ่ของยุโรป โดยเฉพาะจากประเทศเนเธอร์แลนด์ เบลเยียม และเยอรมันด้วย



www.sirilafarmtentcamp.com

กิจกรรมนำเสนอมีความหลากหลาย นักท่องเที่ยวสามารถมีส่วนร่วมในการดำนา ปลูกข้าว เกี่ยวข้าว ปลูกผัก และผลไม้ร่วมกับชาวบ้านในพื้นที่ ทิวทัศน์รอบหมู่บ้านที่คงความเป็นธรรมชาติ เยี่ยมชมบ้านเรือน พบปะพูดคุยกับชาวบ้านในพื้นที่ กิจกรรมล่องแพ บริการอาหารมื้อเย็นด้วยผักสด สดชื่น ไม้ไผ่กับมันบด บาปี้คว ท่ามกลางบรรยากาศประทับใจในคำคืนที่เรียบง่าย พร้อมกิจกรรมแคมป์ไฟ และมีการปล่อยโคมลอยก่อนเวลาพักผ่อน

ในแง่การบริการจัดการการตลาด การบริการ และที่พักมีมาตรฐานสากล เนื่องจากผู้ประกอบการเป็นชาวเนเธอร์แลนด์และภรรยาชาวไทย มีประสบการณ์ทำทัวร์และอยู่อาศัยในประเทศไทยเป็นเวลานาน มีความประทับใจในวิถีชีวิตเรียบง่ายในชนบท และเข้าใจความต้องการของลูกค้าที่แสวงหาประสบการณ์ท่องเที่ยวแปลกใหม่ แสวงหาความรู้ใหม่จากการเดินทางมากกว่าความสะดวกสบาย บันเทิงใจ ตระหนักถึงการอนุรักษ์ธรรมชาติและวัฒนธรรม เน้นความเรียบง่าย ตามสภาพความเป็นจริง ชอบทำกิจกรรมหลากหลาย สัมผัสและใกล้ชิดกับชาวบ้าน สนใจเรียนรู้วิถีชีวิตประจำวันของชาวบ้าน ชอบค้นหาประสบการณ์จริง แปลกใหม่และท้าทาย รักความสงบสุข สนใจเรียนรู้จากการปฏิบัติจริง อย่างไรก็ตามนักท่องเที่ยวเหล่านี้ ยังต้องการความเป็นส่วนตัว การที่จะไปพักร่วมกับชาวบ้านนั้น อาจไม่สะดวก และรบกวนความเป็นส่วนตัว ดังนั้นผู้บริหารจึงได้สร้างที่พักเป็นเต็นท์พักสไตล์ซาฟารีภายใต้แนวคิดของฟาร์มเกษตรจำนวน 4 หลัง โดยไม่มีการใช้ไฟฟ้า ภายในเต็นท์พักมีพื้นที่กว้างขวาง ประกอบด้วยเครื่องทำความสะดวก เตียงนอนขนาดใหญ่ เก้าอี้หนังเล่น กระจกเครื่องแต่ง ห้องอาบน้ำส่วนตัว ตามมาตรฐานสากล ศิริล้าฟาร์มได้สร้างโปรแกรมทัวร์แบบเหมาจ่าย มีการเผยแพร่ประชาสัมพันธ์โปรแกรมกิจกรรมท่องเที่ยว และรายละเอียดสินค้าและราคาตามมาตรฐานสากลให้ลูกค้าได้เลือกผ่านทางเว็บไซต์ นอกจากนี้ผู้ประกอบการยังได้ใช้กลยุทธ์ช่องทางจำหน่ายที่มีประสิทธิภาพติดต่อกับบริษัททัวร์ชั้นนำในประเทศเนเธอร์แลนด์ และเบลเยียม รวมทั้งตัวแทนสำรองห้องพักทางออนไลน์ที่มีชื่อเสียง โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง เว็บไซต์ agoda.com

ธุรกิจของศิริล้าฟาร์ม เต็นท์แคมป์ มีส่วนช่วยพัฒนาระบบเศรษฐกิจในชุมชนให้มีการหมุนเวียน เป็นการสร้างงาน เสริมรายได้ให้ชาวบ้าน และมีส่วนช่วยยกระดับความเป็นอยู่ให้ดียิ่งขึ้น ในขณะที่เดียวกันก็ช่วยอนุรักษ์วัฒนธรรม วิถีชีวิตเกษตรกรรม และภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่น ที่บรรพชนในอดีตได้รักษาไว้และสืบทอดเป็นมรดกจากรุ่นสู่รุ่นตลอดไป



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What Are the Expectations of Passengers with the Check-In Systems in Suvarnabhumi International Airport?



The researchers want to learn more and investigate the overall expectation of passengers towards service quality among 10 airlines that have three types of check-in system comprising of desk counter, kiosk, and online check-in approaches inside Suvarnabhumi International Airport. We know that checking in is the preliminary stage that passengers have to pass through and it stands as the most essential stage of evaluating service quality for customers; and so therefore, the objective is to perceive whether or not these check-in systems really prove to be more convenient and

time-saving. Furthermore, we want to see if there are rooms for improvement in the services that the airport provides.

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SERVQUAL, theorized by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, is the approach used in this paper in order to measure service quality and compare customers' expectations before obtaining services and their perception of the actual service received. There are five dimensions as follows: First of all, tangibility measures since the completion of boarding pass, problematic baggage, appearance of the airline's personnel as well as its equipment. The second is reliability, which focuses on how the check-in is processed, if all requests are performed accordingly, and whether the airline's reputation influences each passenger in his or her decision to travel in that airline. Thirdly, responsiveness is concerned about the readiness to respond to the passengers' requests, speed of service, service convenience, as well as promptness regarding performance towards requests. The fourth dimension is assurance; whether or not airline staff are effective and efficient, software is trustworthy, passengers feel secure with boarding time, and staff have adequate knowledge about their products. Lastly, empathy which is valued beyond those fundamentals because it is about how much care each airline can give to their passengers.

Using the quantitative method, this research will harness the on-site method based on the samples of 200 survey questionnaires distributed in which we target both Thai and foreign passengers who just finished the process with any airline

specified at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The process took two consecutive days with 7-8 hours per day. We divided the questionnaire into four parts: demographic information, SERVQUAL-based satisfaction, their expectations as well as additional feedback for the airlines. After collecting the data, we analyzed through SPSS using many statistical approaches such as Anova, Chi-Square, etc. in order to know those exact numerical differences among criteria chosen.

All in all, from our research and data shown, we can see that the overall expectation and satisfaction of passengers towards the check-in systems of the 10 airlines providing all three methods of check-in are very high; they are, however, not the highest. Having looked at the SERVQUAL theory that we have applied to see and test the satisfaction of passengers, we can conclude that all those five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are being held satisfactory, but they still have some rooms for improvement. It is clear to us that reliability has the highest mean among the other four dimensions of SERVQUAL, which means that the reputation of airline and helpfulness of staff highly weigh which each airline ought not to disappoint any passengers. This will be certainly beneficial for the airport. For instance, the airline ground staff need to show more empathy towards passengers. It is very important to take their needs and wants into considerations, and provide service from the heart. With respect to passengers' overall check-in experience, Kenya with the least number of samples has the highest satisfaction, but that cannot be reliable so we moved on to the second highest which is Cathay Pacific. However, Aeroflot, reclaimed as an all-time notorious airline, gets the lowest rank.

Comparing the expectations of passengers, we can see that—overall—Western passengers have higher expectations on the speed of service compared to Asians. Westerners want to be assured that they will be able to embark on time without any problems.

Suvarnabhumi International Airport and individual airlines can collaborate and organize quarterly training on service quality and all significant aspects of customer service and give them assistance such as follow-up program with which they can respond to and address passenger complaints. A lot of people prefer checking in with desk counters because they do not have to operate those by themselves. On the other hand, the airport should encourage travelers who do not carry check-in luggage or in a hurry and technology-oriented like business people and teenagers, to utilize the kiosk machines instead.

THM-MUIC *Inside*

WINNING

the Thailand Cake Decoration Championship 2014

Article written by:

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Just being a part of this contest was a great opportunity and valuable experience for us. Even though we occasionally baked for our families and friends, we did not have any chance to enter the bakery industry. Because of all the support we received from Salaya Pavilion Hotel and Training Center (SPH), we were able to join this contest.

We would not have won the second place without the support of SPH officials, especially Ajarn Natetra Dhevabanchachai (General Manager of SPH), Mr. Narongdach Janthong, Mr. Supa Treecharoen, Ms. Kit-sayaporn Un-young, and the kitchen team, who have patiently trained us.

Before the competition, we researched and practiced at the SPH bakery kitchen, and SPH provided us with all the ingredients and equipment that we needed. There were many times that we failed during our rehearsal. In such difficult times, we did feel very desperate but considered it as a good experience because we see it as a tiny aspect of what we would encounter in real life.

During the competition, we were nervous and excited at the same time. Although it was a small contest, we felt that it was really big for us. We were under great pressure while the competition was taking place as there were a lot of people

among the audience who were staring at us. In fact, we never thought we would win. We joined the contest because we love baking, and participating in the contest was a great opportunity for us to experience something new. Imagine our surprise when we won second place! What we considered as our greatest benefit from this contest was not the prize we won. With or without the prize, the most important thing was the valuable experience and insight we have acquired from the competition and the internship at SPH.





Experience

from Salaya Pavilion Hotel and Training Center

There are so many things that I have learned during three my months of Internship I at Salaya Pavilion Hotel and Training Center along with 38 fellow THM students. It is such a good opportunity for all of us to undergo training at Salaya Pavilion Hotel, first, because it is located inside Mahidol University's Salaya campus and, second, this hotel gives us a chance to perform real jobs—to serve the hotel guests.

At Salaya Pavilion Hotel and Training Center, interns are divided into four teams: red, yellow, green, and blue, in four departments: front office, housekeeping, kitchen, and food and beverage, but this does not mean that we will compete with each other because we have to work together as one batch. Working with 38 people in our batch is a very challenging thing to do because sometimes you need to cooperate with everybody in the team. Working as a team can make everyone stressful, but after we get the job done, we see how successful our work was, and this brings us happiness. Furthermore, working together makes me see the other side of people that I never seen before. For the three-month duration of the training, I have learned to become a giving and sacrificing person, qualities needed in Internship I.

As president of my batch of interns, I can say that we have faced a lot of pressure and experienced stressful situations. Despite these, we learn valuable lessons from these cahllenges. In addition, I have learned that to be the President of Internship Batch 56 is not an easy task because I have to deal with 37 people who come from different places and who have different thoughts, so I think that communication skill is very significant for everyone in our batch. Helping other people is another thing that our batch has learned because we always extend helping hands to those who need assistance.

It is not easy to work with many people because people have different ideas, so as president, I think that it is my opportunity to learn how to be a leader and how to control the people in different teams. Also, I have learned that if you want someone to respect you, you need to respect them first. Being President of my batch changes my behavior because I need to think ahead and not think only of my own work.

The three-month training period for me has gone by so fast. We have a lot of good memories and stressful situations that we can all learn from. All of the members of Internship Batch 56 and myself will miss the Internship at Salaya Pavilion Hotel and Training Center, and we could not have undergone these unforgettable experiences and absorbed valuable lessons from anywhere else. Last, but not the least, on behalf of Internship Batch 56, I would like to thank Ajarn Nate-tra Dhevabanchachai and all trainers who were always willing to help and teach us, and we promise that we will use these lessons we have learned from our training experiences in Salaya Pavilion Hotel and Training Center in our future careers.

Thank you Ajarn Nate-tra Dhevabanchachai along with all Department Heads and Trainers!

Best Regards,

Mr. Pheem Chokrasamesiri (Finn)

President of Internship Batch 56

Student of Tourism and Hospitality Management Division

Miscellaneous

Article by
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What Can Make Bhutanese Unhappy Under the Land of Gross National Happiness (GNH)?

I recently had an opportunity to teach hospitality industry E-marketing for managerial hoteliers in Bhutan. This was funded by the University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration Zurich in collaboration with the Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality. My first impression upon landing was one of jealousy of the people living here in the beautiful scenery and in the land of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Whenever you walk past Bhutanese people, they give a natural smile to you. They look happy following traditional customs, which makes them unique from other countries in the world. After a few days of observation, one question repeatedly came up in my mind. What are the factors that can make Bhutanese people unhappy? The following are lessons learned from informal interviews with locals, which can be shared with academics who are interested in this topic:

1. Educational System

a There is a mismatch between management and technical skills development in the educational system. There are many management educational programs available, yet very few for vocational schooling. This creates the need to employ labor trained in the trades from India. Continuation of this trend could affect future labor force dynamics. Presently, it has created a high unemployment rate among recent graduates who have prepared themselves for managerial positions.

b Most Bhutanese parents would like their child to study in a good educational system. The Bhutanese government only subsidizes educational fees for all students in a limited capacity. As a result, there are lots of private schools that serve as alternatives for parents who seek better education for their children. But this creates uneven educational opportunities and financial hardships on lower-income families.

2. Drug addiction - This is a factor that can create negative relationships within the family. Now, addiction rates are still low. It does, however, adversely affect the GNH of not only individuals and their families, but the communities as well.

3. Work ethics — The Bhutanese people have a reputation for preferring a more relaxed approach to work than their Chinese or Indian neighbors. They are aware of this tendency and the King has attempted to address the problem. It is however, pervasive in the bureaucracy. It also limits those who do have a strong work ethic, as promotion is determined by favoritism, not accomplishment of tasks or quality of work.

4. Low population growth - Bhutanese people believe that if they have too many children in the family, they would not be able to afford a good education for their children. Low population growth rates create fewer native workers in the country's development, such as tourism, engineering, etc. Therefore, it becomes an issue of workforce development if the country wishes to improve more in the future.

5. Technology/External Cultural Influence - Technology such as television, mobile phones, and the Internet can interfere with the amount, and quality, of family time. This is undermining the sense of love in the family.

6. Infrastructure development for quality of life —

a Roads. The infrastructure of the country, such as the condition of the roads, needs to be developed for local satisfaction as well as tourism. Bhutan is a mountain-based destination. However, it is hard to travel due to a lack of a well-developed infrastructure. 50-60 km/hour is the limit for all traffic and it is quite difficult to travel in case of emergencies, such as sickness, accidents, etc.

b Communication system, including Internet and Wi-Fi. The Bhutanese government is preparing to develop the country's communication system to become an information system hub, modeling after its neighbor India. Yet, presently, local people still feel that the communication system is not effective. Internet speed is quite slow in their opinion, and they really need the government to improve speed and reliability.

Interestingly, the Bhutanese are happy by avoiding the following: Anger, ignorance, and hate. There were 108 indicators that were developed to measure the happiness of the Bhutanese. These are contained in an official document of Bhutan which had been created to raise awareness for locals to understand the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNP). The government has attempted to improve the quality of life of its citizens and understand their strengths and weaknesses in order to attain happiness. The government knows that some criteria for happiness, like the environment and culture, are strong in Bhutan. On the other hand, the other criteria used for the analysis of happiness, like income, health services, and education, have room for improvement in the country. The government has recognized these as priorities, which is a good start in its bid to provide happiness to its citizens.

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Reading Art at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence: Masterpieces and Interpretation

The Uffizi Gallery can be considered as containing one of the major art collections of the world. While bigger museums certainly exist—the British Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York—they serve as a kind of receptacle of objects collected at the height of their respective colonial periods. This is valid for London and Paris, as well as Berlin, while the ability to purchase objects or attract possible donors can be considered as the case for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. These museums include everything, from Egyptian to Southeast Asian artifacts, spanning from pre-history to modern times.



On the other hand, the Uffizi Gallery is simply a major collection of paintings, intermixed with some sculptures decorating the corridors

Most of all, it first came to being as a private collection, belonging to the Medici Family, who controlled Florence from the mid-15th Century CE up to 1743, when the last ruling member of the Medici family disappeared, and Florence became controlled by the

Augsburg Family and then later, by the Austrian Empire, until 1859.

The palace holding the Uffizi Gallery was originally designated to be the offices for the Archduke Cosimus I. Instead, they became the seat of the collection that the Archduke was building at the time. The major works of art, coming from other families or churches, were actually bought and brought to the Uffizi Gallery, to be perused and admired by the members of the Medici family. It was only after the Italian unification in 1861 that the Uffizi was turned into a national gallery, and started receiving other paintings and sculptures.

Ever since it was turned into a national gallery, however, the Uffizi Gallery has essentially performed the function of being the repository of Italian art of a specific time period. In fact, it can be said that the major works can be dated between the beginnings of 1400 until the end of 1600, with some exceptions, such as the work of some Flemish painters, mostly brought to Florence by other members of the Florentine elite, who were staying in Netherlands and Belgium for business reasons.

Discussing the origin and describing the major works of art of the gallery will require many pages. In fact, I prefer to deal with the two major works of art present in the collection itself: Two paintings from the Florentine artist Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus* and *The Spring*.

I shall provide the interpretation of both paintings as given in the Guide to the Uffizi Gallery I perused during my visit.



La Nascita di Venere (The Birth of Venus)

The painting actually represents the coming of Venus, the Roman Goddess of Love, to the island of Cyprus or Cytera, an island in the Mediterranean Sea. The naked goddess stands on an open giant shell completely naked, as she is blown out from the sea to the coastline.

The two figures blowing wind and flowers from the mouth represent the winds Zephyr and Aura, embracing each other as roses fall from the sky. On the right of the viewer there is a woman with a silk dress, holding a pink cloth to cover the naked Venus.

The painting itself is full of allegories and is part of a myth of the Greek and Roman worlds wherein Venus the Goddess of Love, daughter of the supreme god Zeus/Jupiter, moves to her sacred place.

Still from the same painter, *The Spring* is actually full of references to mythology and philosophy.



La Primavera (The Spring)

The central figure might be Venus again, this time dressed and having a party in her garden. Another figure that returns from the Birth of Venus is the wind Zephyr, here represented on the right side of the viewer, who tries to take the semi-veiled figure of Clori, here represented with flowers coming out from her mouth. And the dressed figure on her right is the same Clori now changed into Flora, the Latin goddess of Spring.

On the other side of the painting are seen the Three Graces, while in the corner, with a red cloth, sword and winged shoes would be Mercury, the messenger of Zeus/Jupiter.

For both paintings, there is possibly a history behind them, connected to the fact that both works were actually given to the same Medici member, as well as we exclude any problem about allusion and reasons for the composition of those paintings. While artists at the time worked under someone's commission, many details of the agreement between the artists and the aristocrat commissioning the work are unknown.

At the time the painting was done, classical culture was permeating the high classes of European society. Greek and Latin authors such as Homer and Cicero were part of the daily culture, and the times also pushed for more literacy, as the books became more easily available and their prices more accessible thanks to the invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in Germany. Philosophy and religious debates became prevalent again through the re-discovery of ancient philosophers, so that a new Academia, based on Plato's school in Athens, could be found in Italy and beyond during 1400 and 1500. As the episode was known, the mention of non-Christian gods and goddesses and events was simply part of the natural environment during the time of Renaissance Florence.

At the Uffizi, flocks of modern visitors go to see the Venus and the Spring. I wonder what do they actually perceive and appreciate. The beauty of the naked/

dressed Venus? The placid atmosphere of the background? The composition as a whole? Books and museum tourist guides are certainly present, but even those guides as much as they explain and say cannot convey the actual knowledge required to fully assess and comprehend the painting of Venus itself.

There are two different elements to consider. First of all, it is a question about interpretation. In 2014, those works of arts are the major attractions of the Uffizi Gallery.

The works of other painters, such as Michelangelo, Leonardo and Raphael, are also present. But their major works are not in the Uffizi, so people are less attracted by them. As Americans, Europeans and Japanese tourists come to see those paintings, the actual meaning of those works is not understandable. If I do not have a background, the work of art will be silent, and no visitors should care about them. Do they know who are Venus, Flora, Mercury? Why is Venus going to Cyprus or why is Clori spitting flowers? What is a bucolic background? They may know something about Venus, but some parts of the myths underlying the origin of the painting are completely ignored.

The Uffizi Gallery does not offer much about it, and the tourist guides do not supply much information either, as compressed as they are between different tour groups in different languages. A new website has been started to offer some supplementary information about some of the objects, but it is still in a beta version, and in any case, not available to the normal visitor. Thus, when the visitor finishes the tour of the Uffizi, he might not be more informed than when he first entered.

But seeing the flow of visitors to the museum, and perfectly knowing that classical culture and its understanding is not part of the normal visitor's baggage, my question is why do the tourists still come?

This question can be simply answered. You do not need to understand a masterpiece—you accept it as it is. If you visit the pyramids in Egypt, you appreciate the monumentality of those structures, not caring whether they were tombs, granaries or offices. If I go to Wat Pho, I admire the reclining Buddha for its magnificence, even if I ignore the actual meaning of such a position or the reasons for the drawings under the Buddha's feet. Reclining Buddha for Bangkok, Venus and Spring for Uffizi and Mona Lisa for Louvre are symbols of the places where they reside, independently from any religious or artistic importance. They are a must-see for tourists for them to admire. Those works of art have reached the level where art transcends the limit of being a simple object of admiration and becomes a symbol. And the symbols attract a lot of visitors as well, as anyone wants to go where everyone goes.

And if the visitors really want to know more, they get more information about the object they see once back home. It is the object striking the visitor's imagination.

The next level in the knowledge is up to them anyway. This is also a point about interpretation as well. If an object is able to grip someone's imagination, the viewer will feel obliged to see and know more about it, and the task of knowing more does not have to be immediately in the museum environment. It can even happen at home as well. The museum can offer such tools, but external providers can do a similar job, resulting in depriving museums of funds or visitors.

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Volunteer Tourism in Developing Countries 'Neo-colonialism'?

"Are these the new colonialists? They're the students who go abroad to boost their CVs, have a laugh - and help out in the developing world at the same time. Gap years are having a rough time. Ageing cynics have long declared the term for the rite of passage between school and university refers to the empty space between the ears of over-privileged teenagers. Or the chasm between materialistic students dripping with iPods and the impoverished subjects of their misguided charity. This week, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) opined that the 'charity tourism' of many year-out programmes was a new form of colonialism. Students who travel to developing countries risk doing more harm than good."

The Guardian, UK (2011).

What is volunteer tourism? The term 'voluntourists' is generally applied to those tourists who participate in volunteer work during their vacation, through organizations that promote the economic, environmental or cultural welfare of some chosen groups in that society (Wearing, 2001). Every year, hundreds of thousands of young adults from the Western world flock to developing countries in the name of "helping" the less fortunate. These 'voluntourists' travel with a desire to change the world. Why is volunteer tourism so popular? Vrsti (2013) explained it nicely:

"Mixing travel and work, hedonism and purpose, charity and self-growth, volunteer tourism seems well-poised to solve the pervasive problem of modern alienation and loss. At a time when the dissolution of wage labour and Fordist social bonds is depriving many people of a sense of social utility and civic purpose, volunteer tourism's emphasis on useful, charitable work helps young people assert their identity in a world of fragmenting meanings and semiotic confusion."

Contributing to the gendering of a nation like in colonial times, developing countries are still depicted as ravaged, tormented, abused and raped (Silva, 2004) and the developed countries as the male actors who rescue them. In this process, the men in the developing countries are still effeminate men. The different stakeholders, such as the host and the volunteer (or other) tourists, the organizations organizing the alternative forms of tourism and the local partners perpetuate the notion of the feminine and masculine, primitive and modern, through their power equations. In addition to feminine representation of developing countries which need help

and require to be taught how to develop sustainably, the concept of 'machismo' gets played in volunteer tourism wherein the Western male aggression is valued for its ability to endure the hardships of life while helping the deprived. It is definitely questionable today whether the purpose of volunteer tourism is to bring the developing world at par with the developed world or to force them to stay the same exotic, pure self that they are imagined and projected as. In the disguise of encouraging self-sufficiency, is it being hindered ever more?

Being aware of the 'voluntourism' tradition, the world's leading travel guide book company *The Lonely Planet* (2014), in its special edition, "Volunteer: A Traveller's Guide to Making a Difference Around the World" adopted a cautious tone:

"Whether international volunteering is the new colonialism or not is, in large part, down to the attitudes of you, the volunteer, and the organisation you go with. If you don't want to be a 21st century colonialist, rule out organisations that suggest you'll be 'saving the world' or give a patronizing image of the developing world. Then question yourself. Be open about why you want to be an international volunteer and what you have to learn from those you visit. Avoiding being a New Age colonialist will take some effort and research, and will require getting rid of many of the usual preconceptions about the developing world."

The literature on volunteer tourism has virtually no evidence of long-term benefits of volunteer work in developing countries, whereas there is a huge emphasis on the transformative experiences of the volunteers. Volunteer tourism is the contemporary manifestation of imperial travel. Ironically, in an era of sustainable development these deprived communities still continue to be celebrated as the 'white man's burden.' Indeed, "the subalterns cannot speak!" (Spivak, 1985). But this is a denial of the humanity — what about human ethics that include the values of equality

among people?

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