**The impact of new commercial airport (Utapao), the new destination of traveller**

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**Abstract**

Nowadays Airline industry is growing rapidly especially in Thailand. Focus on Eastern Economic Corridor (ECC) which lead to one of the government’s Eastern Airport Cityproject. As Bangkok's two international airports are operating beyond capacity The government intends to turn U-Tapao, a military based airport, into a commercial airport which is a third major destination for airlines. Utapao International airport becomes a joint civil–military public airport serving Rayong and Pattaya cities in Thailand. It is in Ban Chang District of Rayong Province. A new second terminal, which will increase airport capacity from 800,000 to three million persons per year. Terminal 2 was opened as in Nov 2017.

Utapao International Airport is the new update of airport in eastern part of Thailand that brings about the new position of transportation. Rather than sea freighter, the air transportation will bring along the freighter, human transport etc. As Pattaya is the main hub for traveler all around the world as well as Utapao International Airport will be the nearest airport. The main aim of the paper is to study the major impact of Utapao International Airport that effects to traveler on transporting to main destination as Pattaya. It would change the way of human movement, product movement, economic movement etc. The paper will show the impact and effect of Utapao International Airport to the new economic zone as known as EEC.

Keywords: Eastern Economic Corridor, Economic, EEC, Transportation, Travel

**Introduction**

Tourism has emerged as one of the major global economic businesses in the 21st century. Tourism can be understood as a process of individuals or groups traveling from one place to another place to gain pleasure or business experience. In Thailand, tourism is one of the largest and key sources of foreign currency in Thailand. Cultural and natural tourism, adventure and sports tourism, pilgrimage and religious destinations, and national parks are the areas of the Thai tourism industry. Tourism cannot be developed without a functioning of transportation system.

The tourism industry can only operate with the availability of other tourism essentials such as transportation, accommodation, entertainment, food and so on. Transportation is the most important contributor to the tourism industry. In general, the main function of transportation is transit, carrying people and goods from one destination to another. People use transportation services to travel from one place to another seeking tourism or to deliver tourism goods. Transportation is by far one of the most essential components of the tourism industry. A well-developed and functional transportation system means a well-structured possibility of reaching various markets and providing the best quality service to the traveler.

There are many ways of travelling both by land, by sea, or by air, travellers can choose their travelling option from

their convenience. Air transportation can bring about the change of travelling style of people in EEC area who love to visit the eastern part of Thailand which are Chachoengsao, Pattaya, Rayong, and Chonburi. This is leading the ability of outcome to gain more economy of scale for people and business in the area.

**Literature review**

Air transportation is the fastest and the most regulated transportation system currently. With new technology and development came along fastest jet planes and aircrafts, that allowed traveling faster than ever. Now the travelers can explore new areas and long distance travel in short time. The expansion in air transportation in tourism industry introduced many untouched and non-popular areas to not only western society, but also travelers from around Southeast Asia. As a matter of fact, at the moment any corner of world can be reached under 24 hours.

It has managed to gain significant part of the transportation market in recent years, especially to destinations longer than 500 kilometers away. A scheduled air transportation system offers a safe, convenient, reliable, frequent, and consumer-centered service. Air transportation is becoming more and more popular among the travelers who want to arrive at destinations quickly. (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 419.)

On February 1, 2018, the Thai parliament approved the law for trade and investment in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). With the EEC, Thailand hopes to develop its eastern provinces into a leading ASEAN economic zone.

The EEC straddles three eastern provinces of Thailand – Chonburi, Rayong, and Chachoengsao The government hopes to complete the EEC by 2021, turning these provinces into a hub for technological manufacturing and services with strong connectivity to its ASEAN neighbors by land, sea and air. The government has identified four “core areas” essential in making the EEC a renowned economic zone: (1) increased and improved infrastructure; (2) business, industrial clusters, and innovation hubs; (3) tourism and; (4) the creation of new cities through smart urban planning. The government predicts the creation of 100,000 jobs a year in the manufacturing and service industry by 2020 through the EEC.

“Aerospace and aviation are key industries in Thailand,” said Korbsiri Iamsuri, Director of Thailand Board of Investment in North America; “The expansion of the U-Tapao International Airport for commercial traffic and for maintenance and repair operations, will further enhance our already strong offering in the aerospace sector.”

**Methodology**

The research methodology is look through the review from the secondary data on the purpose of;

1. The impact of EEC to traveller
2. The future of EEC on travelling campaign

As from the review found that:

The Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) Development Plan under scheme of Thailand 4.0 aiming to revitalize and enhancing of the well-known Eastern Seaboard Development Program that had supported Thailand as a powerhouse for industrial production in Thailand for over 30 years.

Under this initiative, the Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand (the EECO) has been assigned to drive the country’s investment in up-lifting innovation and advanced technology for the future generation. The EEC Development Plan will lead a significant development and transformation of Thailand’s investment in physical and social infrastructure in the area. To establish the third main international airport in Thailand for business expansions, as well as to better facilitate the establishment of a Special Economic Zone in anticipation of the EEC expansion. In addition, this will serve a passenger link to Don Muaeng International Airport and Suvarnabhumi International Airport, while simultaneously supporting growth as a regionally important aviation hub.

This project accepts private investments in developing the U-Tapao International Airport as a part of the U-Tapao International Airport and Eastern Airport City Development Project. Private Public Partnership investments will allow continuous development of the airport and many various activities including: construction readiness and serviced maintenance of the Terminal 3 building, as well as the Commercial Gateway, Phase II Air Cargo, Phase II Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul services, Phase II Aviation Training Center, and the Free Trade Zone.

The expansion of the U-Tapao International Airport for commercial traffic and for maintenance and repair operations, will further enhance our already strong offering in the aerospace sector. Moreover, The EEC connectivity, the U-Tapao International Airport and the high-speed train that links major three airports will make Pattaya the heart of the eastern cities. Plenty of attractions in the area will lure lot more foreign and domestic tourists in the future."

**Key factor**

Pattaya is increasing in popularity all the time with visitor numbers from almost all areas of the world rising annually. Not only short term visitor, but also long-term visitors, business man also increase in Pattaya and Rayong. Since there is no public airport from Don mueng or Suvarnabhumi to Chonburi, Pattaya and Rayong, opening U-Tapao International Airport in Rayong province, just 30km from Pattaya, is bringing the new era of transportation to these provinces.

To improve connectivity by air, Thailand is expanding the U-Tapao International Airport with the opening of a second passenger terminal and runway, the U-Tapao International Airport’s passenger capacity will increase from its current 800,000 people to 3 million. The expansion will not only facilitate an increase in tourist arrivals – attracted to Thailand’s eastern beaches – but will also transform U-Tapao into a hub for aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul, air cargo, and logistics to accept the large number of passenger in the next 10 years.

Nowadays the airport is already popular with the domestic carriers such as AirAsia, Bangkok Air and Kan Air, with China Southern Airlines also having many flights to and from the airport, but it is hoped that the expansion will not only be good for local business on the Eastern Seaboard, but also be beneficial for tourists. As a result, from number of travelers who visit Pattaya and Rayong or any other eastern province such as Chantaburi and Trat, developers, investors and most businesses in Pattaya will have a chance to better business. Long term visitors in the form of working expats are also like to increase in the city as it is the destination of choice for many.

An increase in expats and tourists show a bright future for the city and gives it a firm foundation on which in can grow still further. The city is booming and it seems that everyone wants to be a part of it.

**Result**

Look back to the main problem of lack of commercial airport in EEC area.

1. There is no public airport to travel people from Bangkok to Pattaya, Chonburi and Rayong. As passenger especially foreigner need to travel by coach and taxi which are quite dangerous. The road accident in Thailand still got high risk.
2. Foreigners like to go to that area as they are a massive of travel attraction like Pattaya. This can bring about the significant economic growth.

Those are 2 common issue that effect to safety atmosphere to traveller. As they would like to go to EEC area, there are only a few ways to get there that lead to the safety issue as well as cut of some travelers who want the comfortable way to get there. We found that travelers who demand comfortable life they willing to spend more money than general backpacker.



Figure 1: The economic ability of EEC

The result after open Commercial airport (U-Tapao), foreigners can travel to EEC area with air that safer and faster. This can bring the way of traveling for both Thais and foreigner to travel to the area. We are predicting that the economic would grow triple. The new hub of the airport in EEC area can bring traveler, cargo, and business. With the expansion and upgrading of Utapao International airport, there are several airlines available. These airlines fly to different destinations locally and internationally. .Some of the major local destinations include Chiang Mai, Phuket, Hat Yai, Udon Thani and Koh Samui. Popular international destinations include Macau, Shanghai, Nanning and Nanchang in China and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. In the recent times, the airport has airlines that fly to other major cities in the world. Some of the major airlines and destinations include:

* Air Asia to Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Phuket and Udonthani.  Plus Macao, Nanning, Nanchang and Kuala Lumpur
* Bangkok Airways to Phuket and Koh Samui
* Hainan Airways to Haikou and Sanya
* Donghai Airlines to Shenzhen
* Qatar Airways to Doha
* Thai Lion Air to Chiang Mai
* Nok Air to Changsha, Nanchang and other Chinese cities

The airport can gain the most significant criteria into the location includes number of traveler in the area, growth of economic, growth of career and growth of developed landside. All those significant criteria lead to the high development and can challenge the old destination to become the modernized destination.

### **Conclusion**

The EEC Development Plan will lead a significant development and transformation of Thailand’s investment in physical and social infrastructure in the area. To establish the third main international airport in eastern of Thailand under the EEC Development plan will lead to a business expansion, as well as to better facilitate the establishment of a Special Economic Zone, is also lead to a significant development and transformation of Thailand’s investment in physical and social infrastructure in the area. The government predicts the creation of 100,000 jobs a year in the manufacturing and service industry by 2020 through the EEC. And new private investment and public infrastructure investment would be about Baht 300 billion each year from now. Investment in the EEC alone could spur economic growth by 2 percentage points on top of the current average 3 per cent GDP growth.

The U-tapao expansion project was expected to enable Utapao / Pattaya airport to handle 15 million passengers within the next five years, 30 million in the next 15 years and 60 million in the next 20 years.

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