



## UNDERSTANDING A TOURIST DESTINATION: A TOURISM HISTORY APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

*There are highly dynamic and interactive studies on host communities at different tourist destinations. Some studies focus primarily on a particular community as a case to study the implications of tourism development. Many are interested in a more holistic approach, tourist destination development concepts observed in various tourist destinations. However, most of those studies limit their attention only on communities during the period of tourism development. There is a lack of theoretical approaches to guide a researcher to develop an understanding of a tourist destination from an integrated, multiple, different timeframe. To this concern, this paper explores the theoretical foundations of a history by drawing on the aspect of tourism history. The tourism history concept in this paper takes a community in their pre-tourism development into the analysis on the community during its meeting through the tourism processes. Understanding the past will deepen and broaden our understanding of the community's society through a continuous period of its tourism development.*

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**Keywords:** Tourism, Tourist destination, Tourism history, Local community

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourist destination research, particularly in rural tourism research, mostly has been discussed primarily in both destinations' lifecycle and the implications of tourism on destinations. For studies of destinations' lifecycle, arguably, those researches are origins of destinations lifecycle based on Butler (1980). The concept refers to the process of transformation of destinations after going through the pressure of rapid and heavy tourism development. With this research area (Priestley and Mundet, 1998; Hovinen, 2002; Papatheodorou, 2004; Butler, 2006; Haywood, 2006), it has granted understandings of tourist destination development processes. On the other hand, studies on

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ISSN(e): 2224-4441/ISSN(p): 2226-5139  
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the implications of tourism on destinations have been discussed around issues such as destination marketing (Dawson *et al.*, 2011), destination image (Govers *et al.*, 2007), destination competitiveness (Morgan *et al.*, 2004), local business network (Morgan *et al.*, 2003), and destination planning (Formica and Kothari, 2008). While research in the area of destinations' lifecycle provides understandings of destination development, studies in relation to implications of tourism on destinations have provided important insight into impacts of tourism and management-oriented area in tourist destinations.

Although there has been considerable interest in both destinations' lifecycle and the implications of tourism development on tourist destinations, there is a gap in those researches. Most of those studies limited their analysis of any tourist destination only within its tourism development timeframe, portraying in theirs' local experiences, socio-spatial and socio-cultural of host communities. According to Marwick (2001), when an area shares common features of unify of change in attitudes, values and social hierarchies in particular time, then the locale live in a specific historic periodization. In the history philosophy, the specific historic period in a local's chronology forms the privileging of institutional historical and cultural view of the community (Dymond, 1982; Evans, 2001). Thus, in studies of tourist destinations, this specific period is then referred to a tourism period, which is simultaneously institutionalized in a community development.

Despite the presence of tourism experiences and practices of the locals in the studies of tourist destinations, there is a lack of considering different timeframes. In the notion of history, the significance of the past reflects in the present of the locale and ultimately contributes to the prediction of their future (Evans, 2001). Accordingly, a study of a tourist destination within the tourism history approach needs to look at a community beyond it exposures to the tourism industry. The approach refers to a study of a community that meeting through tourism processes by taking the pre-tourism period of the locale into a research's analysis. As each period has built upon each other over time (Evans, 2001), a locale's history and cultural legacies have influenced the production of the local society during its tourism period. To understand a tourist destination is to understand the process of transformation of a community from a traditional livelihood (pre-tourism industrial, agrarian and agriculturally organized) to tourism livelihood (service industrial, capitalist, more urban and business oriented). By considering within this concept, the understanding stems from negotiations of a place's historic legacy and the global process of tourism.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the notion of history, and to discuss its potential use in tourism and hospitality research. Specifically, it aims to examine complex 'historical' aspects of the new concept in tourist destination studies. The paper starts with the discussion of the pertinent characteristic of history as a discipline involves in tourism studies before moving to the typical relationships between the two areas. Then, the paper discusses on the conceptual foundation of tourism history, the implications on both theory and methodology. The paper concludes with the future research on this approach.

## 2. AN AVOIDANCE RELATIONSHIP

Despite the world's largest and most dynamic industry of tourism and the contributions from diverse disciplines in social science, the phenomenon of tourism has only gained attention in history research and writing. Historians writing about tourism were slower to emerge. To

understand the reasons behind those research barriers is to understand the notion of historical writing. In common usage, writing about history is concerned with three aspects – time, place, and theme (Dymond, 1982; Carr, 2001; Evans, 2001). From these respects, there are three major possible reasons separating historians from tourism phenomenon.

Firstly, under the aspect of time, it is about a period of historical writing. The scope of time is an important aspect within historical writing as its central concern is the documentation of change over time. Although a timeframe varies depending on the theme of the research and of the historian's interest, traditional historians prefer an event that has its own values and standards period of time (Collingwood, 1959; Barnes, 1962; Burke, 1991; Kanjanaphan, 2000; Carr, 2001; Evans, 2001; 2002). With this respect, the study of tourism could be deemed by historians to be sometime an endless. Tourism is commonly concerned with current processes with its continuing timeframe rather than a complete set of period.

The second reason historians did not study tourism because of the location where tourism is in action. Under the concept of place in historical writing, historians tend to focus on a national level rather than a small-scale unit. Traditional history is centered within national history formation (White, 1990). It is particularly associated with the contemporary national attitude, national identity, and/or life of those elite groups (Carr, 2001; Evans, 2001). It is not until the local history approach gained an academic respect, a subject of locale and local people is perceived as insignificant (Thompson, 1978; Dymond, 1982). Therefore, a subject of locales who encountered to tourism development is lack of concentration for historians. Moreover, this is not to mention that to study socio-cultural significance of tourism in a tourist destination required unfamiliar methodologies to historians. Historians have long been trained in doing research in archive manners rather than in ethnographic styles (Jordanova, 2000). Therefore, tourism is a subject more into anthropologists rather than historians.

The third reason is under the aspect of theme. The theme in historical writing is a significant event that contains values and experiences of its society. As mentioned above that historians focused on constructing national attitude and national identity, then the themes of historical writings are mostly circled around political events and elite groups for conventional history. As historical discourses are characterized by national-scale, then the discourses represent issues or events that have/had significant influences leading to substantial changes in societies (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1995). With this attitude, the study of an event that is less connected to the national history is ignored (Thompson, 1978; Burke, 1991; Carr, 2001; Evans, 2001; 2002). Tourism is also thought to be about studies of indigenous people or small-scale societies (Stonich, 2000; Tucker, 2003). From this respect, tourism hardly exists within the umbrella term of 'historical event' along with historical writing.

For these reasons, tourism was then rarely mentioned in history literature. Although Walton (2009) notes that any study of tourism 'cannot be understood without reference to what has gone before; nor ... to predict or preempt the future without achieving some understanding of where we and others have come from', tourism is a relatively new field for history. However, with the recognition that historical studies with a focus on tourism offer a particularly interesting field of study. There is the rise of historical study in tourism phenomenon can be seen through key journals in the field of history. For example, the long-established Journal of Transport History now

increasingly deals with issues of travel and tourism (Walton, 2005). Moreover, the Journal of Tourism History was launched in 2009. It is the official journal of discipline of history for the interest of historians in tourism events.

### 3. A TYPICAL RELATIONSHIP

Apart from the recent emergence of tourism studies within the area of history (Walton, 2005), the characteristics of history have long been applied within tourism studies. Summarizing from Walton (2005; 2009), there are three perspectives of a general review of past contribution of history in tourism research.

The first relationship between history and tourism is in the form of *history of tourism*. This concept is much written about the timeline of the development of tourism. It covers areas such as the history of tourist activities and the history of a tourism industry at a destination. This relationship relates to ‘the evolution of tourism in specific localities’ (Towner and Wall, 1991). However, the relationship should not be limited to simply understanding the notion of tourism development in any location (Engerman, 1994; Towner, 1996; Walton, 1997; Walton, 2005). Rather, the analysis of the history of tourism in a location should provide an understanding of the place (destination) in relation to its contemporary culture, society, economy and environment over time. This, however, is in this paper emphasized.

The second relationship is under the foundation that *history as a form of data for tourism*. In line with Walton (2009) observation that ‘a key role of history in tourism studies is to challenge or complicate disarmingly simple stories about the past through detailed and carefully documented research in archives as well as published texts’, the element of history in tourism studies appears in form of statistical records or a linear chronology of tourism development. The essential practice within history using sources of historical data is also found in tourism research, not only in the form of statistical records, but also in the form of personal documents and oral narratives (Towner, 1988). Moreover, tourism research has been presented in different forms such as government reports or travel writing (Walton, 2009).

Finally, there is the conceptualization of *history being used as a tourism commodity*. Walton (2009) argues that with this perspective ‘history tends to be reduced to a scattering of attractive tales, traditions and vignettes’. Walton (2009) further explains that history is used ‘for the purpose, as part of systematic projects in the creation of national or regional identity and distinctiveness’. Thus, historical commodities in the form of cultural identities, historical events and historical heritages have functioned to promote and to develop tourism industry (Robinson *et al.*, 1996; Richter, 1999; McKercher and Du Cros, 2002; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Tucker, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Ryan and Aicken, 2005).

Within this aspect, historical legacy has become a mechanism for economic regeneration in tourist destinations. As discussed above, the role of history in tourism studies or vice versa has been addressed by several authors (Picard, 1996; Hall, 1997; Stonich, 2000; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Tucker, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Walton, 2005). Rather than a research focuses only on the implication of tourism development on local cultural conditions. However, it does not address the core concern of this paper.

Tourism history is a study of a tourist destination because of the reinforcement between local cultural conditions and tourism processes.

#### 4. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF TOURISM HISTORY

Accordingly, Walton (2005) notes that to understand a tourist destination, it is important to take various aspects of the destination into consideration. Walton (2005) states:

A problem in tourism studies has been a prevailing present-mindedness and superficiality, refusing deep, grounded or sustained historical analysis even when dealing with essentially historical processes [...], which is about change over time but usually treated schematically and without reference to how the product has developed, under what circumstances, constraints and cultural conditions and how that might affect its present prospects.

Therefore, these reviews clearly highlight the importance of incorporating all aspects of a destination's tourism development process, which include its culture, social, economic and political changes over time, without losing sight of the destination's historical and cultural legacies in the analysis of its tourist destination development. To address this concern, this paper develops a tourism history approach based on a three-pronged approach: 'touristification of tourism' (Picard, 1996) and the 'touristic transition' (Cohen, 2001) and the 'touristization' by Young (1983). The concept of the 'touristification' (Picard, 1996) of a culture recognizes that tourism needs to be understood in terms of *how* it becomes part of local culture.

By taking this approach, it will help to understand how locals *receive* or *resist* tourism into their community. Specifically, this approach will help to carefully take into account its local values, concerns and practices before meeting through the tourism processes.

The second approach, touristic transition (Cohen, 2001), refers to the process of integration between a society and its tourist culture. Touristic transition is a process of transformation of destinations 'in order to either adapt them to tourist demand or to prevent their progressive destruction' after going through the pressure of rapid and heavy tourism development (Cohen, 2001). This concept looks at the process of local community to has accumulated tourism development.

The final approach, touristization (Young, 1983), is based on the process of change, particularly changes to the landscape because of tourism development. The dynamic processes of landscape development from one stage to another stage are influenced by the growth of tourism development. Within this concept, it links a place, people and tourism system together. These three premises, in particular, provide a conceptual foundation for the development of the tourism history concept, which reflects the importance of incorporating all aspects of a destination's tourism development process.

This includes its cultural, social, economic, political and environmental landscape, which changes over time, without losing sight of the destination's historical and cultural legacies in the analysis of its tourist destination development. Therefore, the conceptual framework of tourism history needs to span organizational boundaries and take into account the multilevel character of a destination.

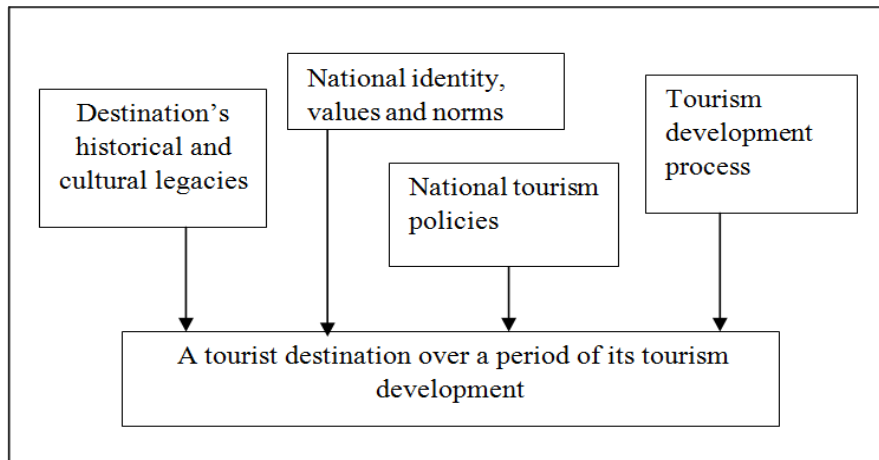
**Figure-1.** Tourism History, A Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the tourism history. It provides an overview of how the concept works together. Tourism history is conceptualized through the linking of the fundamentally historical perspective of a destination society, tourist destination development theory, and the concept of the tourism period. This approach is therefore the examination of the process of tourism expansion and the effects of tourism upon a particular, traced over an extended period. This not only results in a destination's changing socio-cultural aspects, but also changes of land use, landscape, geographical and occupational distribution of population and their economic activities, that ultimately affect their livelihood. At the same time, under the concept of tourism history, the paper recognizes the process of local community's change and adaptation towards tourism development expansion in association with its historical and cultural legacies. As such, this tourism history approach suggests that the history of a society is a process of continuous and mutable progressing of a society as a tourist destination that is reinforced by a combination of the global tourism process and local cultural heritages. Therefore, the tourism history approach explains how tourism emerged and blossomed in a local community along with the consequences of tourism on the local community society, considering its historical and cultural legacies in accordance with the national history.

## 5. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Tourism destination literature has tried to describe and understand the implications of tourism in a host community in various aspects. It focuses on only the duration of a community during its tourism development period. However, research has paid less attention to the question of how it is a place possible to develop the tourism industry. A local community is an integrative, multi-relationship phenomenon. We argue that such implications of tourism development need to extent to the pre-tourism period and integrate the two periods for analysis. Such a view requires attention to historical and cultural legacies of a community, national identity, values and norms, national tourism policies and the tourism processes. The requirements for integration of the two different period's considerations direct attention to important theoretical dimensions that can be valuable and provide a focused and comprehensive understanding of what it takes a local community to change

and adapt themselves through the tourism processes. It will disclose a multiple issues in the community that meet through the tourism processes. It provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues surrounding a tourist destination community.

Concerning the tourism literature, the paper calls for attention to factor beyond the traditional focus on various kinds of a community that conducts tourist activities. The proposed model discussed some key components of destination development in respect of a locality and tourism in space and time. The paper thus tried to select theoretical dimensions of particular importance and described how these are linked to each other. The three dimensions – touristification, touristic transition, and touristization, are all well studied in the literature, but they have not previously been linked together and applied in an integrative, multilevel setting. In this approach, tourism is no longer seen as a solely actor contributes to a tourist destination's change, cope and adapt physically and socially with the increased cultural and social exchange. By taking into account the increased importance of various kinds of context where the analysis of a tourist destination needs to include multiple levels, this is an important step in developing analytical tools that can provide a deeper understanding of any change and adaptation of a place as a tourist destination.

Its approach offers a clear understanding of the historical perspective of tourism in the context of understanding the tourism influence on the societies' change and adaptation over time. Similar to other form of history, this does not mean that tourism history is in competition with traditional history. In fact, it is a part or a sub-area of traditional history. It is not only to give more aspect to history as a discipline, but also to contribute to the history of a whole nation (Dymond, 1982; Towner, 1988; Towner and Wall, 1991; Evans, 2001; 2002). The recognition of this leads to an essential shift in emphasis from conventional to a more local aspect of history. With this tourism history approach emerges an understanding of a community's changes over time. It reflects in the present of the locale within its tourism context. Ultimately, it contributes to the wider picture of a national history.

## 6. METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Using a case study that can demonstrate the tourism history is appropriate. A given location needs to have a distinctive period between the pre-tourism period and the tourism period. Although the two periods are separate when examined in terms of development strategies, they have been built upon each other over time and were influenced by a wider history. For a discussion of a community in its pre-tourism period, it is a reconstruction of the experiences of the local life in the passing of time. It builds self-presenting collections of locals' norms and values. It is a study of the local culture at a certain point of time.

In the case of tourism period, the analysis of the role of history in understanding of change associated with tourism development is to examine the use of the terms 'theme', 'place' and 'time' in local history perspective in specific tourist destination applications. As tourism involves various aspects of a destination's economy, politics and culture, thus, it is clearly perceived as a significant cause of many changes as a tourist destination. In this view then tourism becomes a 'theme' – a cause of tourism historical research. In the light of this idea, tourism causes changes in the social structure and the historical sequences of development (Stonich, 2000; Tucker, 2003). The issue of 'place' in tourism history research is referred to a given location where the tourism industry taken

place. It is imperative to recognize the place as a tourist destination is the negotiations of the place's society and the global process of tourism. Mostly, it is a place the witness the process of transformation from a traditional livelihood to a tourism livelihood. In the aspect of 'time' of tourism history, the period of contemporary development of a destination's society is a corresponding to a specific historical stage of development. When research concerns locals' roles and relations that emerge from everyday life, the end of the local's tourism period is a time to construct an ethnographic fieldwork. Therefore, in tourism history research, oral history and ethnography methods are employed to undertake the fieldwork. The research accounts are based on interviews, involvement and discussions concerning tourism practices and locals experiences of a tourist destination society. People experiences over time (through oral history method) and their everyday practice (through ethnography method) are included in the construction of tourism historical research.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Studies of tourist destinations have received attention in both destination lifecycle and the implications of tourism. Our theoretical framework emphasizes a timeframe that is importance for understanding of tourist destination. A tourist destination is an integrative of two major periods. Such a view requires attention to pre-tourism considerations, and tourism considerations. This integrative multi-period perspective can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues influencing a tourist destination development. Studies of tourist destination have tried to describe and understand the process of change in socio-cultural and physical environments of a host community. However, research has paid less attention to what has contributed to the within community process beyond tourism processes. We argue that under the historical perspective, the tourism processes creates one particular period for a community's history. This particular period influences the community to form common features of a community's norms and values. Each period is built upon each other. Therefore, to understand the period of a community living with tourism processes is to consider a pre-tourism period. The discussion on tourism history needs to consider the local historical perspective. It has clarified the importance of this approach, tourism historical research, being undertaken thorough focusing on people and their socio-cultural and physical environments at the local level. Tourism history discourse focuses on how locals change and their adaptation toward tourism development at the tourist destination by taking on their history and cultural legacies into the analysis. Moreover, tourism historical discourse is not only related to the local area but is also influenced by national history and the country's tourism development strategies. The requirements for integration and multi-timeframe considerations direct attention to important theoretical dimensions that can be valuable and provide a focused and comprehensive understanding of what it takes to be a tourist destination. This allows for an understanding of the processes of change and adaptation of a tourist destination's society and geography within its tourism development period.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was funded by the Research and Development Institute, Khon Kaen University, Thailand.



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