

# DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM, THAILAND.

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**Abstract** - The objective of this research is to study the operating conditions and developmental problems and obstacles in development of historical tourism within Thailand as well as presenting development guidelines for historical tourism at the Bangkok National Museum, Thailand. This research will utilise qualitative research, including in-depth interview method as applied to data collection, with the key interviewees being key executive and operating officers in the Bangkok National Museum, tourists, tourism industry entrepreneurs and community leaders in the Phra Nakhon District (Bangkok) to represent a total of 70 persons. Data was analysed by utilising descriptive statistics, compiling of the acquired data. Studied phenomenon were examined through a determined analytical framework of analysis. This analytical framework considers four primary elements: finance and resources available to institutions, the level of service quality provided by the institutions, network learnings and development of institutions and the participation process of institutions. The research's findings indicate that the National Museum's operating condition could be developed to be a profitable historical tourism location and the developmental problems and obstacles were primarily issues of limited budgets for studies and research, conservation and collection of the important antiques, while tourism services and facilities had not yet been able to create a positive impression or experience for tourists, management lacked the facilitation of learning and developmental network in the group of the intellectuals or students and new generation youths with few participating intourism locations or the development of people or sites within local areas. The guidelines for the development of progressive historical tourism development within the National Museum is part of a preparation of master plan for development that covers historical tourism and its wider industry, with an emphasis on the development and improvement of goods and services along with other supporting tourism infrastructure and support in various areas such as service quality of individual officers, landscape and accessibility improvement in physical sites, improved understanding of contextual data content, linkage of international history and the addition of public relations via old and new media, parking areas and other logistical improvements, article cleanliness, support for communities and people to understand and cooperate in creating identity and heritage of the locality.

**Index Terms** - Development of Tourism, Bangkok National Museum, Historical Tourism

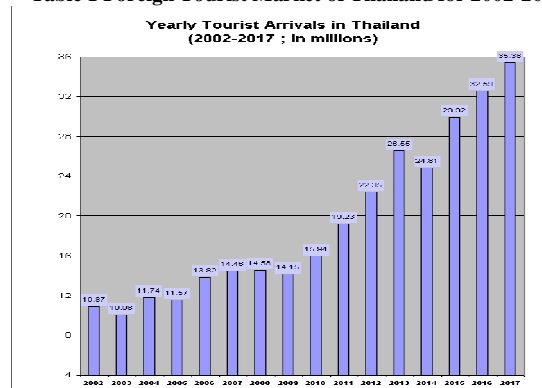
## I. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICATION OF PROBLEMS

Modern tourism has been deemed as an industry that generates huge value through income to the Thai economy each year. If considering the perspective of tourism management systems, it is found that the tourism operation on consists levels of national and area level tourism. On the national level, the perspective of the tourism in the country consists of aesthetic natural resources and environment, culture and tradition, historical significant sites, including artefacts and has been considered as a important revenue source for the national economy.

Tourism exists in various forms whereas historical tourism is the one of the most valued forms of tourism for the Thai economy. Historical tourism relies on locations which are linked with past history and rely on admiration and enjoyment of the tourism attraction, acquisition of knowledge and understanding of history and archaeology of a locality based on responsibility and awareness moving towards the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental value of historic sites and artefacts. The communities in a locality must be active participants in tourism management. In addition, tourism promotion policy within the public sector aiming at preserving and developing historical tourism supports the determination of clear point of

sale and linkage for mutual assistance under sustainable development guideline to create value (VaratMatthayombur, 2009).

**Table 1 Foreign Tourist Market of Thailand for 2002-2017**



Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017  
[https://www.mots.go.th/more\\_news.php?cid=480&filename=index](https://www.mots.go.th/more_news.php?cid=480&filename=index)

Bangkok a province with many important historical archaeological sites and antiques, and has been regarded as the well-known province in the realm of historical tourism. It has proven advantageous as a travel hub for connections to other final destinations in Southeast Asia and international travel, which has caused Bangkok to become an important final destination of tourists and stopping point both with

both conveniences in basic public utility and remarkableness for historical tourism.

Due to its aforementioned importance, museums therefore hold an important place and should be developed, conserved, restored, publicised and extended as a source of cultural learning. However, museum-related understanding as treasury of history and source of tourism has been non-existent. Most Thai people have understood museums as just a storage place for antiques (JiraJongko, n.d., Page 2). Even though museums have continually developed themselves but from the perspectives of tourists, the museums retains its old image, particularly the Bangkok National Museum, which has been the first Museum of Thailand for its people and storing their heritage.

The museum was established during the reign of King Mogkut, Rama IV. Its current age is 144 years with the museum first opened on the 19 September 1874. However, from the past statistics, visitors have continuously decreased since the museum's opening. Even though various fine arts departments on behalf of the affiliated government agencies have always strived to improve, promotes activities and publicises the National Museum, number of visitors and participants of activities have however returned to be in opposite trend.

In 2015, the rate decreased from 2014 by over 18.36% (Ministry of Culture, 2016), possibly as the result of a presentation style that lacked variety, a lack of modern renovation of exhibition rooms, and a failure public relations to capture the interest of tourists. This has resulted in the Royal Palace and Wat Pho, attractions only 500m away from the museum absorbing the majority of tourists.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the "Development of Historical Tourism: A Case Study of Bangkok National Museum, Bangkok Metropolis". This research's results will provide data for use as guidelines for planning and development of historical tourism locations, especially the Bangkok National Museum to be an important historical community learning centre and enable it to become a significant tourism site. The data generated can be used for planning and development of tourism locations as well as development models for historical tourism locations and other locations accordingly.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

1. To study the operating conditions for the development of historical tourism of the Bangkok National Museum, Bangkok, Thailand.
2. To study problems and obstacles in the development of historical tourism of the Bangkok National Museum, Bangkok.

3. To present guidelines for the development of the Bangkok National Museum, Bangkok, as a historical tourism location.

## III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

In this research, the researcher has applied: R&D concepts, tourism theory concepts, and placed an emphasis on the role of community organisation and participation in development of sustainable tourism. The developers of historical tourism must comprehend these principles for clear understanding and the accurate development planning. Necessary factors for development must be endeavoured to grasp in good development of tourism locations. Those factors consist of four areas which are finance and resources, tourist service quality, network learning and development, and participation process as follows.

1. Finance and resources. The supporting basis for successful organisational management is budgeting which is deemed as an important factor in management. Budgeting must be used in any operations and the administrative agencies that are unable to provide for themselves, for instance: construction, cars and vehicles that must be entirely supplied by budget (ChanthaneeSanguannam, 2018). Money or properties used in public sector operations are allocated based on the plans of the project.
2. Tourist service quality is the level of value which is derived from the experience of tourists in relation to: conditions of service compared to expectation gained to the experience of a tourism location. Service quality can be assessed from: tourist satisfaction with facets of their experience such as: transportation services, accommodation services, restaurant and entertainment services, tour guide services, merchandising, and safety services and to the experience of sites and artefacts (RatchaneewanBoonanan, 2012).
3. Network learning and development is the creation of networks that will develop tourism continuously and forcefully, for instance, enhancement of skills of the local community in relation to knowledge related to tourism services and giving the opportunity to the local community in showing and benefiting from their service capability. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports stated that tourism management by the organisation of each community will cause cooperation for search of appropriate tourism management guidelines that create value for visitors and local communities.
4. Participation process is deemed as the key to community management. The participation process is giving people the opportunity to freely exchange their opinions and demands in mutual: brainstorming, decision making, taking action,

evaluation, and benefit gaining. The support of local people participating in tourism development, such as establishment of tourism promotion groups and tourism activity-related occupation groups, will make people desire to participate more in development of tourism locations (PanuratDeesamer, 2009). According to the related concepts and theories, the researcher has formulated the conceptual framework of research as in Figure 1.

#### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology in this research is as follows:

Research population: 70 persons.

Sample Groups: 5 sample groups.

1. 1 executive of Bangkok National Museum that is the Director of Office of National Museum.
2. 7 operating officers of Bangkok National Museum such as the museum administrative officer.
3. 30 Thai tourists and 20 foreign tourists.
5. 6 guiding business entrepreneurs.
6. 6 community leaders in Phra Nakhon.

#### **Instruments Used in Data Collection**

This research utilises qualitative research using interviews and surveys as the instruments used in data collection through snowball sampling. The construction of questionnaires was guided research-related literature review and then processed to address questions used in interviews. The instrument which was constructed by the researcher was verified and revised by the expert. The main questions are as follows.

1. How are the current operating conditions for the development of historical tourism within the Bangkok National Museum in the areas of: finance and resources, tourist service quality, network learning and development, and participation processes?
2. What are the problems and obstacles in the development of historical tourism within the Bangkok National Museum?
3. How should the development of the Bangkok National Museum proceed to be a historical tourism location in your opinion?

#### **V. DATA ANALYSIS**

Utilising descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, the researcher primarily analysed data post-interview. After data harvesting, the researcher recorded data and categorised data into topics for convenience in analysis, read and reviewed the finished data, endeavoured to grasp data, separated the essence aspect into descriptive categories, analysed data by content and theme analysis, and then presented in terms of recapitulation.

#### **VI. RESULTS OF RESEARCH**

The research results from in-depth interviews with the group of informants can be summarised as follows:

##### **1. Operating Condition for the Development of Historical Tourism for the Bangkok National Museum**

The results of interviews with the informants indicated that most informants of the research subjects entertained corresponding opinions that the Bangkok National Museum had potential as a tourism resource and is prepared to partake in development to be a historical tourism location since it is a museum that receives a supporting budget from Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture. In conjunction with financial resources provided by the government the museum's budget can be augmented by charging a collection of visit fees of 1 USD for Thai nationals and 6 USD for foreign nationals as well as from sales of souvenirs and other merchandise. Within the museum, there are a number of important tourism resources that can potentially attract tourists to visit the museum, such as the important pieces of antiquity, for instance, pre-historical eoliths, Buddha images, idols and images in Buddhism and Brahmanism over 2,000 years of age.

Moreover, a variety of services related to tourism activities such as conference/seminar rooms, a guide service for consumption in English, French, German and Japanese languages are provided. Travel and access to the Museum is convenient, being located near other major tourist attractions and routes.

Within the network learning and development, findings indicated that the Bangkok National Museum organised significant activities within the community such as organising, Thai Heritage Day Conservation Day, performing the musical and dancing arts, circulating exhibition relating to relationships within Thai diplomacy with various countries. Co-operation is obtained from: the Ministry of Culture, The College of Dramatic Arts, and community networks. The opportunities are given to all segments to play a role in the mutual development and problem solving related to the operation of the museum through Sub-Committees and co-creation.

When considering the elements of a tourist attraction, three key areas must be managed: access, facilities in good condition and the overall development of the location and promotion so that the museum can become well-known and attract more tourists.

##### **2. Problems and Obstacles in the Development Bangkok National Museum as a Historical Tourism Location**

The findings from the collection of the informant group's opinions indicated that the areas which are most consistently problems and obstacles in the development of historical tourism at the Bangkok

National Museum consists of three areas: budget, roles and mission, and service quality as follows:

1. Budget - even though a yearly budget is available, it is limited. For instance, budgeting for the activities of the Bangkok National Museum has been around 300,000 Baht per year only, thus the government museum firstly aims its focus on the collection of antiques and therefore the development of activities has been lessened, while development of historical tourism requires larger budgets.
2. Role and mission – the determined role and mission of Bangkok National Museum has not covered the development of the Museum as a historical tourism location, resulting in no existing plans to upgrade or repurpose the museum. Moreover, regulation issues have occurred, resulting in difficulty for cooperation between parties who require assistances, for instance, despite there being individuals who desire to obtain external finance in order to assist the Museum by fund raising, the National Museum is unable to manage the improvement of the Museum itself without consent of Fine Arts Department. It was consistent with the finding of the research results of Komen Kantawatheera et al. (2012) which revealed that the primary problem of tourism management within Thailand has also been related to the implementation of public sector policies, resulting in failure of tourism management as expected.
3. Service quality – problems related to the quality of services within the museum, tourism facilities such as toilets, restaurants and parking lots are inadequate for the number of tourists visiting the site. Additional lounge areas for recreation, searching services for data and content related to exhibitions through digital systems, modern and attractive presentation formats, linkage of content into international contexts are required for the museum to facilitate the existing demands and expectations of tourists.

The finding from the collection of the informant group's opinions indicated that the Bangkok National Museum should focus on improvements within service areas was classified into five items, such as: presentation or display (grouping of articles and lighting), provision of detail data about the objects and articles (content and sign-boarding), learning equipment, circulating exhibitions, and cleanness. The analytical result indicated that the matters which should be maximally improved are two items consisting of presentation or display (presentation or display (grouping of articles and light), provision of detail information of the objects and articles (content and signboard). Matters which should be improved moderately was learning equipment and matters which should be secondarily improved was circulating

exhibitions. The matter which should be minimally improved was cleanness.

### **3. Guideline for Development of Historical Tourism of Bangkok National Museum**

Findings indicated that guidelines for development of historical tourism within the Bangkok National Museum that the institutions role and mission must be further developed to incorporate a master plan and timeline for its development as a historical tourist destination, including seeking the commitment of resources, key stakeholders and orientating them towards the development of the museum. These guidelines would also stipulate: operating guidelines, budgeting, divisions of management and labour in the operation of the museum, activation of local communities. In addition, other strategic management tools such as core competence analysis, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, strategic positioning of the museum, stakeholder mapping and experience design studies should be undertaken as well as a promotions plan to raise awareness about the museum.

#### **3.1) Guideline for Venue Development**

In venue development, exhibition organisation should be regularly changed and not remain static. Improvement and modernisation to the museum's exterior can drastically alter visitors' perceptions. With an adequate supporting budget provided by the government, a contemporary museum that meets the wants and needs of modern visitors can be produced. The museum should also aim to integrate local stakeholders and communities and become a facet of their daily lives and routines to further add value, in an effort to transform the museum into a contemporary and lively social hub.

#### **3.2) Guideline for Content Development**

The articles exhibited in the museum are displayed in an entirely decontextualised manner, jumbling objects without hierarchy or are displayed lifelessly, reducing their interest for visitors. For this reason, the objects should be displayed within their proper context, both to Thai and international history, as well as how the objects were used in daily life in the past.

When creating contextual clarifiers for exhibits, the first thing which must be considered is who will visit to view the museum, providing information to various customer segments. Captions should be written for differing reading levels and historical understanding of an average visitor per segment, explaining the significance of the object without utilising jargon or specified language that would alienate visitors and fail to convey the significance and meaning of artefacts. The museum thus must create the appropriate content for the existing articles and attempt to accumulate new information in combination with existing information and knowledge which is already held within the museum or stakeholder groups. New information

should clarify the significance of ancient and rare objects as well as national property. History should be interpreted in new way and cultural mapping project should be established in order to know the location of the objects through a centralised system that provides: a clear timeline, hierarchy and customer journeys through the museum.

### 3.3) Guideline for Presentation Development

The captioning of exhibitions in a manner that that is accessible to all segments enhances the value of existing objects. Captioning should be undertaken in a manner that is appealing to target segments, provides context and an understanding of why the artefacts are significant and relevant. Simultaneously, the museum should create data sets surrounding objects that would be useful for academics and other interested stakeholders through digital medias and a cataloguing system to augment the experience of the museum and provide a knowledge resource that is accessible for the wider community such as educators and researchers. To further the relevance of presentations, digital medias and tools such as Google Art Project should be utilised to present the museum virtually, to improve its accessibility.

### SUGGESTIONS

The researcher's findings can be summarised as follows:

1. The Thai Fine Arts Department should consider and clarify the roles and missions of each museum under its supervision to have flexible management and improve the management methods in order that museums can be a source of academic learning and research as well as tourism locations for its province. The identity and prominent points of each museum should indicate and reflect the importance of each region and facilitate deeper understandings.
2. Service quality problems are a significant issue in the development of historical tourism for the Bangkok National museum. Therefore, it is necessary to provide further training to museum officers providing services in relation to experience the museum. This would include: training in a variety of languages, training in service quality, improvements in officers' presentation and further training in providing historical perspectives and insights into the museums collection. Further developments and improvements to the services and goods that the

museum offers as well as aesthetic and functional improvements to buildings and landscapes, including amenities and their maintenance must be improved. The museum must also improve its public relations by engaging various stakeholders such as the media, local communities and potential visitors to take part in the creation of identity and heritage.

3. The Bangkok National Museum should prepare a cohesive plan that maps the improvements that the museum requires, as well as operationalising relationships and co-creation with the museums consumer segments and other public stakeholders such as: government, educational institutions and local communities, as well as recruiting private stakeholders whom could contribute to the museums budgeting through sponsorship or through facilitating private interests.

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