



Tourist attractions in Bangkok and Singapore; linking vandalism and setting characteristics



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Links between vandalism (property damage) at attractions and the site characteristics (physical setting).
- Confirmed that properties of vandalism revealed in western studies are applicable to the Asian context.
- Features of site design and management varied between the sites.
- Importance of design, management and stakeholder involvement in visitor attraction management.
- Reviews how to present, protect, and preserve tourist attractions.

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ABSTRACT

The study adopts an exacting observational approach to vandalism and its site determinants in two pivotal Asian cities, Bangkok and Singapore. The study served three goals: to develop and evaluate an observational approach to auditing the damage to tourist attractions; to link the setting characteristics to the indicators of damage; and to explore the applicability of Western constructs of vandalism and control to these Asian settings. A cluster analysis identified five kinds of sites which differed systematically in levels of disrepair and the factors influencing that damage. Sites with higher and lower levels of vandalism appeared in both cities. Powerful factors limiting damage were identified. The western site determinants for vandalism applied to the Asian settings.

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1. Introduction

Across the decades of tourism study there has been a recognition that well managed, appealing tourist attractions are pivotal to the health of the tourism system (Fyall, Garrod, Leask, & Wanhill, 2008; Gunn, 1994; Pearce, 1991). Attractions are key icons in destination marketing efforts and they are frequently used to spearhead regeneration projects and new developments (Jafari, Fuat Firat, Ahmet Süerdem, Søren Askegaard, & Dalli, 2012; Leask, 2010). Arguably, visitor attractions play a pivotal role in the appeal of tourism destinations because they act as motivators for both local and leisure based travel (Leask, 2010; Shaw & Williams, 2004; Weaver & Lawton, 2007). Edelheim (2015) refers to visitor

attractions as contributing to the narratives of place identity and adding meaning to visitor experiences. An inclusive approach to commercial and non-commercial settings is underpinned by the view that the term attraction refers to “a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention” (Pearce, 1991, p. 46). The approach is supported in the works of Faulkner, Moscardo, and Laws (2001), Swarbrooke (2002) and Morgan and Messenger (2009). For the purposes of specific site analysis and research, large spaces and corridors such as the Great Wall of China, the Rocky Mountains or the Rhine River are effectively collations of attraction sites and visitor opportunities.

Within the broad array of tourist attraction studies there are two themes that have rarely been brought together to build more sustainable tourism destinations. The topic areas which can be juxtaposed are analyses of attractions in Asia (Henderson, 2010) and the specific concern of the physical damage by tourists and others to

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site facilities (Crotts & Pan, 2007; Garrod, Fyall, Leask, & Reid, 2012). There are three specific justifications for exploring the conjunction of these topics. There is the issue of the costs incurred, and these costs may be in terms of replacing materials, maintenance time, surveillance requirements and the larger issues of reputational damage and ill effects on the community. A second justification for the juxtaposition of the interest areas lies in the ongoing rise of tourism in Asia, both in terms of domestic travel within and across Asian countries and international arrivals from other continents. There is some public concern that the new waves of tourists are placing pressure on tourist sites and that their behaviour is not always exemplary (Benckendorff, 2006). In this context, building the study of attraction management in the Asian region may be a step towards the broad goals of minimising impacts and promoting sustainable practices and policies. A third reason for linking the topics lies in exploring the applicability of concepts about vandalism and the influence of site characteristics developed in the western (and especially British and North American) contexts. The question being addressed here is do the conceptual approaches and mini-theories about damage and the influence of setting characteristics transfer to Asian attraction sites?

Working in the important Asian hub cities of Bangkok and Singapore, the first aim of the present study is to develop and evaluate an observational approach to auditing the damage to tourist attractions. A second aim is to link the setting characteristics at a range of tourist attraction sites in these two cities to the indicators of damage. A third goal is to explore the applicability of Western constructs of vandalism and control to these Asian settings.

The specific goals of the research can be set in the broader context of supporting the development of an informed approach to creating and managing sustainable tourism attractions in Asia and beyond.

1.1. Literature review

Two topic areas are considered to build the conceptual and methodological background to meet the aims of the research. Most attention is given to the environment design influences on vandalism. This literature provides considerable information on the kinds of outcomes which may be assessed at tourist sites and the site characteristics seen as likely to influence those outcomes. A second supporting area of interest lies in exploring and employing observational studies. It will be argued that this style of work with a long history in other social science areas has some special strengths for the present research.

1.1.1. Environment design influences on vandalism and its prevention

The following definition is central to the use of the term vandalism in this research project.

Vandalism is as an act of intended human aggression that is effectively anti-social, which while not necessarily invoking criminal charges, does result in damage to or loss of property.

Some key points in this approach include an emphasis on aggressive behaviour, anti-social behaviour, acts of property damage and losses to society.

The foundation work in this field includes the study of defensible spaces by Newman (1972) and the explanations of vandalism by Cohen (1971). Their perspectives are based on the premise that deviant behaviour can be influenced by opportunity and may not always be planned a long time in advance. The more contemporary

discourse on crime prevention through environment design (CPTED) in the works of (Cozens, Saville, & Hillier, 2005) and (Ekblom, 2011b) also attends to the properties of the physical setting. The CPTED concept is based on crime-prevention studies (Clarke & Mayhew, 1980; Cozens, 2008; Cozens et al., 2005; Ekblom, 2011a; Jacobs, 1961; Jeffrey, 1971; Lynch, 1960; Newman, 1972; Poyner, 1983). Bhati and Pearce (2016) applied CPTED in a tourism setting. The key ideas recognise that specific features of a setting can discourage offenders and deviant behaviours. The following succinct sub-sections present a discussion of the importance and appropriateness of key characteristics.

1.1.1.1. Territoriality. Newman (1972) in *Defensible Spaces* emphasised the importance of 'sense of belongingness' and 'ownership' of the environment. Clearly defined boundaries of public, semi-public, semi-private, and private space provide perception of control and thus influence behaviours within the environment. Different forms of territorial cues include symbolic barriers (signage, both verbal and non-verbal) and real barriers (barricades, marked walkways). Several studies have shown the link between higher levels of territorial claim and low crime rates (Devlin & Brown, 2003; Glasson & Cozens, 2011; Reynald, 2013). Closely linked to territoriality is the opportunity to provide surveillance.

1.1.1.2. Surveillance. The opportunity to provide guardianship by a property owner determines levels of surveillance (Ekblom, 2011b). Informal elements (e.g., open facility design, windows) provide a natural self-surveillance opportunity to visitors and employees of the attraction. Formal organised surveillance elements (e.g., site guards) show involvement of guardians and stakeholders (Cozens et al., 2005). In addition, technological progress has provided mechanical elements in the form of CCTV cameras and artificial lighting to enhance possible levels of surveillance (Sohn, 2016).

Certain features of the physical setting such as adequate illumination in the physical setting and reduced visibility due to corners or bends influence possible levels of surveillance. The perception of surveillance is a deterrent in itself, limiting deviant behaviour in advance. An individual's perception of being watched, such as the feeling of being monitored by guards or CCTV camera, affects behaviour and encourages desired behaviours (Ekblom, 2011b).

1.1.1.3. Access control. This concept focused on reducing the opportunity of open access in an environment and the resultant increase in the perception of risk for offenders. Access control includes the access to the attraction from outside and access to the artefacts within the attraction. A survey of the literature reveal that access control mechanics include informal measures (physical design and landscaping elements), natural element (waterfronts, highways), formal/organised (entry points and exit nodes), and mechanical tools (automated gantry, security codes). The concept can be expanded to include additional elements limiting access to artefacts and features within the attraction. These are classified as organised access control measures in the study. Measures in form of railings, tamper-proof clear glass/plastic panels, and display cabinets limit open access to visitors (Clancey, Lee, & Fisher, 2012; CPTED Committee, 2000; Leanne, 2011; Reynald, 2011). Further, some measures such as natural and mechanical access control are more effective in limiting entry into the attraction, while informal and organised elements are more relevant within the attraction. Studies by Newman (1976, 1996) and others (Albrecht & Das, 2011; Buckley, 2010; Shaw & Williams, 2004) have indicated an association between increased access control and lower levels of vandalism.

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