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Is Pai a Sustainable Tourism Destination?

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Abstract

Requested and sponsored by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), this study was carried to evaluate the implementation plan of the TAT sustainable tourism practice (the 7 Greens Concept) to Pai District, Mae Hong Son Province. Assessment tools included a questionnaire for domestic tourists visiting Pai (n = 200) and small tourism related business interview (n=15). Indicators applied to evaluate the outcomes from the implementation of 7 Greens Concept through tourists' questionnaire were structured in a meeting by the Director of the TAT Regional and Provincial Sectors of 20 persons. The results showed that the domestic tourists visiting Pai felt that tourism environments in Pai did not reach their expectation. Interviewees who are small tourism related business in Pai recognized that the TAT promoting conservation activities for sustainable tourism but only a few of them involved in the implementation of the activities.

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1. Introduction

The beginning of the idea, the term and concept of sustainability was initiated from the concern over aspects of conservation and resource usage (Miller & Twinning-Ward, 2006). Starting from the early twentieth century, the concept gained rapid recognition with the promotion and assistance of global organization such as the United Nations (UN), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Weaver, 2006). Consequently; the regional organizations such as the European Union, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) were also emphasis on environmental conservation through significant publications such as Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring* and Hardin's (1968) *The Tragedy of the Common*. These environmental movements make human being understood and aware of the devastating environmental consequence caused by uncontrolled human activities (Miller & Twinning-Ward, 2006).

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The implementation of the sustainable concept was well established in forestry conservation including zoning for recreation purposes by the early twentieth century (Nash, 1968). In the late 1950's the concept has also been pragmatic to human use over the land and the outdoor recreation activities known as carrying capacity. Later the carrying capacity was extended and integrated with biophysical and societal aspects to create a more sophisticated carrying capacity concept (Mitchell, 1989). Therefore, sustainable development criteria can be viewed not only as an environmental policy that focus on the need to reunite the present and future economic stability through the environmental conservation, but also a development to increase the quality of human life (IUCN & UNEP, 1991).

It was at the UN Environmental Conferences held every 10 years from the 1st Conference in 1972 to the 5th Conference in 2012 where the sustainable concept gained noteworthy acceptance. In the third UN Environmental Conference in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (informally known as the Earth Summit), Agenda 21, a well-known action plan and the final document of the conference was presented. However, from the 40 chapters of Agenda 21 tourism development is not notified. It was in the 1993 when the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was found and assigned the task including sustainable tourism aspect (Spindler, 2013) that the sustainable tourism concept is well established as a precursor to tourism development.

2. Tourism and Sustainability

Since sustainability is one of the most significant concept for tourism (Hall, 2009), Jafari (2001) provides a convenient framework for understanding the emergence and transition of sustainable tourism (Figure 1). Each stage builds on its precursors but it does not mean the earlier stages became less influential. Jafari explains these stages by the sequential presence of the 'advocacy', 'cautionary', 'adaptancy' and 'knowledge-based platforms or perspectives' (Jafari, 2001).

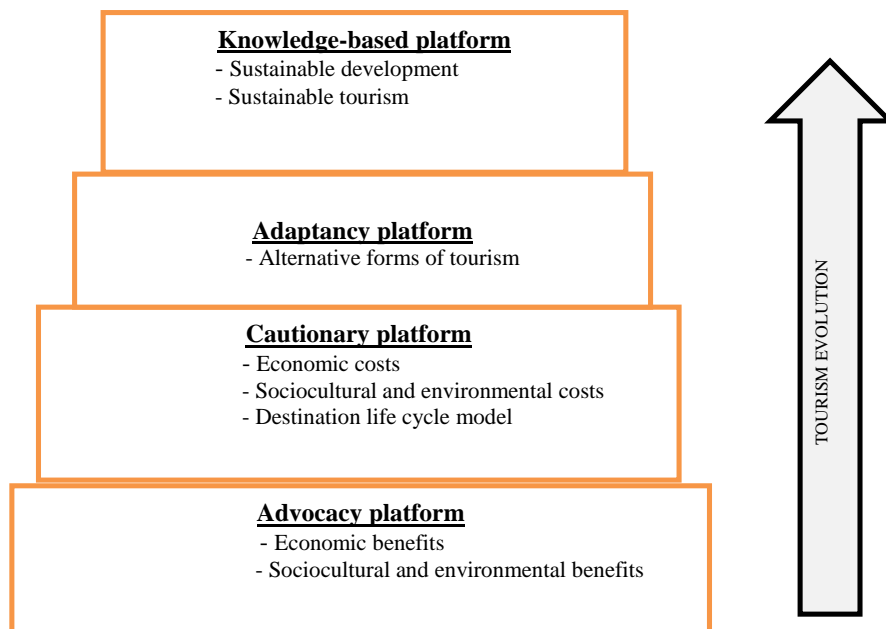


Figure 1: The emergence and development of sustainable tourism: 'Jafari platform'
Adapted from Jafari, (2001)

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