

Tourism Management at Phu Phrabat Historical Park: Challenges of World Heritage Listing

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Received: March 01, 2026

Revised: March 20, 2026

Accepted: March 31, 2026

Abstract

This study analyzes tourism management at Phu Phrabat Historical Park in relation to its World Heritage designation, investigating the associated potential and problems. The research seeks to: (1) examine the beneficial and detrimental effects of World Heritage designation on local communities and the site's tourism potential; (2) evaluate the importance of Phu Phrabat Historical Park as a World Cultural Heritage site; and (3) recommend strategies for tourism development and area management in the surrounding context. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, integrating documentary research, site surveys, participant observation, questionnaire surveys, and comprehensive interviews with principal players from the public sector, commercial sector, local communities, tourism-related enterprises, and visitors. The results show that Phu Phrabat Historical Park has great cultural and landscape value. This is because people have long interacted with the natural world there, and it is an important cultural landscape in Southeast Asia. World Heritage listing also makes it harder to manage issues such as conservation, visitor pressure, land-use restrictions, infrastructure development, and community involvement. The report stresses that for Phu Phrabat to have sustainable tourist management, international, national, and local stakeholders must work together. This includes planning that involves everyone, good methods to safeguard history, and fair sharing of the advantages of tourism. These results offer pragmatic direction for enhancing long-term heritage management and fostering sustainable tourism growth at World Heritage sites.

Keywords: Tourism Management, Phu Phrabat Historical Park, World Heritage Site

Introduction

Cultural heritage tourism has become a major force for economic growth, cultural preservation, and the building of identity in the world of tourism. The evolving interplay between tourism and heritage has garnered significant scholarly interest, especially with World Heritage Sites (WHS), where the necessity of conservation must be reconciled with the demands of development. Cultural legacy not only embodies the historical continuity and identity of civilizations but also functions as a vital tourist asset that augments destination appeal and competitiveness (Rosická et al., 2016; Santa-Cruz & López-Guzmán, 2017).

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention's goal is to find, safeguard, and keep cultural and natural property that is of "Outstanding Universal Value" for all people. World Heritage listing, on the other hand, typically leads to more people wanting to visit, turning heritage sites into global destinations and putting more stress on their physical, social, and environmental systems (Yang et al., 2019; Van der Zee, 2024). This kind of recognition can help the economy and improve the branding of a location, but it can also lead to problems like overtourism, resource degradation, and social and cultural upheaval (Pedersen, 2002; UNESCO, 2011).

So, managing tourism in World Heritage sites needs a holistic and long-term approach that balances conservation goals with tourism growth. Sustainable tourism is the management of resources in a way that meets economic, social, and aesthetic requirements while also protecting cultural integrity and natural processes (UNWTO; Rosická et al., 2016). UNESCO stresses the importance of working together

with stakeholders, participatory governance, and adaptive management as important ideas for managing heritage tourism well.

Recent studies show that managing history well requires the participation of many different groups, such as local communities, government agencies, and businesses. Community involvement is very important for the long-term preservation of heritage sites since local people are both protectors and users of heritage resources (Özgeriş, 2024; Farid, 2015). On the other hand, not enough engagement and fragmented governance can make conservation initiatives less effective and make tensions between stakeholders worse.

Further, the increasing convergence of culture and tourism has established World Heritage tourism as a significant area of scholarly inquiry in recent decades (Zhang et al., 2022). Researchers have pinpointed significant issues, such as reconciling authenticity with commercialization, regulating visitor traffic, and guaranteeing fair allocation of tourism advantages (Demiröz, 2025; Coimbra et al., 2025). These problems are especially clear in underdeveloped countries, where the government may not be able to plan well or allocate resources well.

In Southeast Asia, cultural landscapes are a special type of heritage that combines natural and cultural qualities. They show how people and their environment have interacted over extended periods of time. These kinds of landscapes need management systems that take into account both physical and non-physical aspects of heritage. The Phu Phrabat Historical Park in Thailand is a good example of this complexity because it has geological formations, archaeological evidence, and religious importance all in one cultural landscape.

Phu Phrabat is trying to get on the World Heritage List, but it has a lot of problems with managing tourism, such as building infrastructure, planning for conservation, coordinating with stakeholders, and getting the community involved. Insights from other World Heritage Sites indicate that inscription alone does not ensure sustainable outcomes; instead, robust management systems and participatory methodologies are crucial to alleviate adverse effects and enhance benefits (UNESCO, 2011; Kutlu, 2024).

This study seeks to enhance the existing knowledge on heritage tourist management by analyzing the Phu Phrabat Historical Park within the context of World Heritage tourism. It aims to investigate the interplay of conservation, tourism development, and community engagement, and to recommend ways for sustainable management in accordance with international standards. This research examines both theoretical and practical aspects, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with managing cultural heritage sites in the context of global tourism.

Objectives

1. To study the positive/negative impact on the community / the potential of tourism management of Phu Phrabat Historical Park as a World Cultural Heritage Site.
2. To study Phu Phrabat Historical Park as a World Cultural Heritage Site.
3. To propose nearby tourism development for area management in a World Cultural Heritage Site context.

Research Question

Suppose Phu Phra Bat Historical Park has been declared a World Heritage Site.

1. How should Phu Phrabat Historical Park develop the potential of Tourism management in accordance with UNESCO World Heritage Site Management?
2. How should the site have a positive/negative impact on the community, and what is the potential of tourism management of Phu Phrabat Historical Park as a World Cultural Heritage Site?
3. How should we propose the vicinity tourism development for the context of a World Heritage Site?

Literature Review

1. Cultural Heritage Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism has become a significant sector of global tourism, indicative of the increasing demand for genuine cultural experiences and historical involvement. It is well known that culture and tourism work together to make places more appealing, with cultural assets making a place more appealing and tourism helping to protect heritage and boost the economy (Richards, 2018). Cultural heritage tourism includes both physical and non-physical things, such as monuments, landscapes, customs, and activities that show what civilizations are over time (UNESCO, 2011). Recent literature underscores the vital significance of cultural heritage tourism in local economic growth, job creation, and community empowerment, especially in poor nations (Rangkuti et al., 2025). At the same time, researchers emphasize the difficulty of managing heritage tourism because of the conflicting goals of preservation and making money (Demiröz, 2025). This contradiction has resulted in heightened scholarly focus on sustainable and responsible tourism frameworks.

2. Heritage Management and Sustainable Tourism

Heritage management is the process of keeping cultural resources safe, maintaining them, and making sure they are still useful to society. People are starting to see it as a dynamic and ongoing process that includes both physical and non-physical legacy elements (MDPI, 2024). Sustainable tourism is now a key idea in heritage management. It stresses the need to find a balance between economic rewards, protecting the environment, and maintaining social and cultural integrity. The "Triple Bottom Line" strategy, which looks at economic, environmental, and social sustainability, has been used a lot in tourist research (Rangkuti et al., 2025). UNESCO standards say that good heritage management needs planning that takes all parties into account, long-term monitoring, and working together with all interested parties (UNESCO, 2011; Pedersen, 2002). Moreover, recent studies underscore the significance of governance, authenticity, and destination management in influencing sustainable outcomes (Kaul et al., 2025). On the other hand, deficiencies persist in the integration of theory and practice, especially in the realms of long-term monitoring and cross-cultural applications.

3. Tourism Impacts on World Heritage Sites

When a place is named a World Heritage Site, it often gets more attention and tourism, which can have both good and bad effects. World Heritage classification improves destination branding, brings in international tourists, and helps the economy (Yang et al., 2019). On the downside, it can cause too many tourists, damage to the environment, and problems with social and cultural norms (UNESCO, 2011; Pedersen, 2002). Recent literature evaluations recognize tourism pressure as a paramount concern in the administration of World Heritage Sites, especially within urban and cultural environments (Coimbra et al., 2025). If not handled appropriately, the rise in visitors might put heritage sites' authenticity and integrity at risk. Also, there has been a lot of talk about heritage commodification, which is when cultural assets are turned into tourism products. Commercialization may improve visitor experiences and economic rewards, but it can also result in the erosion of authenticity and cultural significance (Demiröz, 2025).

4. Stakeholder Participation and Governance

Stakeholder involvement has been recognized as a crucial element in the sustainable management of historic tourism. For effective governance, government agencies, local communities, the corporate sector, and international organizations (UNESCO, 2011) need to work together. Community involvement is very important since people who live there are both the guardians and the ones who benefit from heritage items. Research indicates that participatory methodologies augment conservation results, foster social acceptance, and guarantee equitable benefit distribution (Rangkuti et al., 2025). Governance difficulties, such as institutional fragmentation, lack of coordination, and conflicting interests among stakeholders, are still very important, nonetheless. Recent studies advocate for more inclusive and adaptive governance frameworks that amalgamate local insights with global benchmarks (Coimbra et al., 2025).

5. Emerging Trends in Heritage Tourism Research

Recent studies show that cultural heritage tourism research is starting to show some new patterns. First, there is a rising focus on combining heritage with new types of tourism, like sports tourism and creative tourism, to make destinations more competitive (Rangkuti et al., 2025). Second, new technologies like digital heritage, virtual reality, and smart tourism have become key tools for improving visitor experiences and helping with conservation. Third, research is focusing more and more on cultural landscapes, which combine natural and cultural elements and need to be managed in a holistic way. These landscapes show how human actions, the environment, and cultural meaning are all intertwined (UNESCO, 2011). Even with these improvements, the literature still points to problems with multidisciplinary integration, long-term sustainability evaluation, and using theoretical frameworks in real-life situations (Kaul et al., 2025).

6. Research Gap

Despite considerable study on cultural heritage tourism and World Heritage management, notable gaps persist. First, empirical studies are scarce about the amalgamation of conservation and tourist management within cultural landscape contexts, especially in Southeast Asia. Second, the part that local communities play in making decisions is often not studied enough. Third, further studies that focus on the specific problems that new World Heritage Sites face are needed. Consequently, this study enhances the literature by analyzing tourism management at Phu Phrabat Historical Park, emphasizing the interplay between cultural protection, tourism development, and community engagement within the World cultural context.

Conceptual Framework

The scenic and cultural landscape of Phu Phra Bat Historical Park is distinctive. In terms of authentic cultural Heritage—the original cultural heritage—reflects the great culture of the time. The cultural landscape of Phu Phrabat Historical Park is distinctive, reflecting its rich history and exemplifying Southeast Asia's cultural heritage. Study the tourism database for Phu Phrabat Historical Park and explore the potential for tourism management of UNESCO-listed World Heritage Sites. The study results show that developing a World Heritage Site requires international, national, and local cooperation. To achieve sustainable development as a World Heritage Site, researcher has concluded.

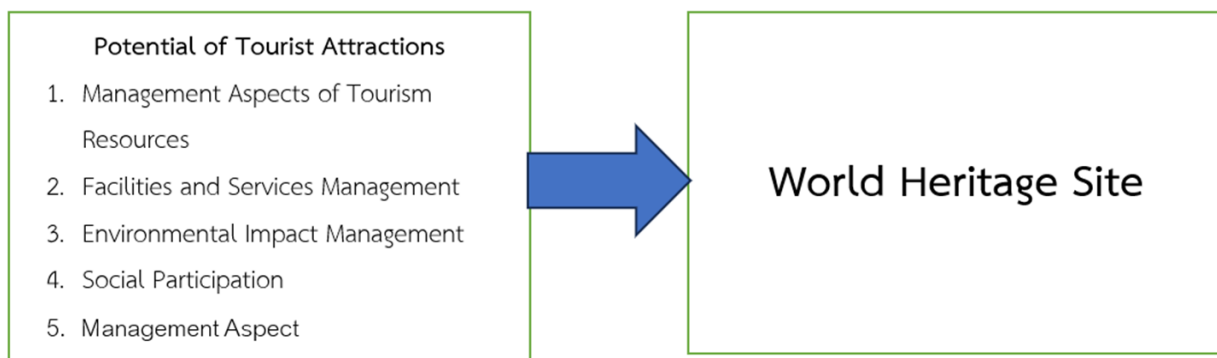


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The Scope of the Study

This research study has a specific scope to study tourism management, the development of tourist attractions, and the management plan of tourist attractions to support Phu Phra Bat Historical Park, Ban Phue District, Udon Thani Province, by comparing with the places that have been registered as World Heritage Sites, as follows:

Policy aspect: By comparing the area of Si Thep Historical Park and the related ancient settlements in the Si Thep Cultural Landscape area, Si Thep Subdistrict, Si Thep District, Phetchabun Province.

Physical aspect: The physical character of Phu Phrabat Historical Park is defined by its sandstone mountain setting, dramatic rock formations formed by long-term geological processes, and vegetated terrain that integrates with cultural and historical features, making it both a natural and an archaeological landscape.

Social aspect: The social aspect of Phu Phrabat Historical Park lies in its role as a shared space of living, belief, memory, and identity. It demonstrates how societies across different periods have adapted to, respected, and sacralized the natural landscape, making it not just an archaeological site, but a social and cultural landscape shaped by human values over thousands of years.

Cultural activity: The cultural activity aspect of Phu Phrabat Historical Park is defined by ritual practice, religious worship, artistic expression, storytelling, and education, all deeply rooted in the natural environment. These activities reveal how humans have continuously used the site to express beliefs, transmit values, and maintain cultural identity over thousands of years.

The Scope of the Area

Phu Phrabat Historical Park and Wat Phrabutthabat Bua Bok

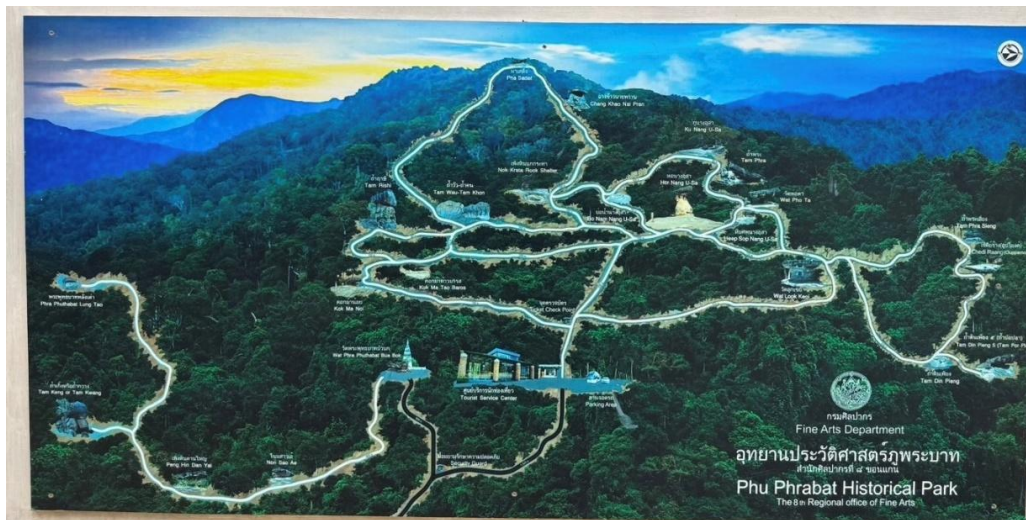


Figure 2: The scope of this research

Source: Map of Fine Arts Phu Phrabat Historical Park

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of tourism management at Phu Phrabat Historical Park within the context of World Heritage listing. The combination of methods enables triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. The research emphasizes an interpretive qualitative approach, complemented by quantitative data to support empirical analysis.

2. Study Area

The study focuses on Phu Phrabat Historical Park, located in Ban Phue District, Udon Thani Province, Thailand. The site is characterized by its unique sandstone formations, prehistoric rock art, and religious significance associated with the Sima stone tradition. The research area also includes surrounding communities and buffer zones that are directly affected by tourism development and heritage management.

3. Population and Sampling

The study population consists of key stakeholders involved in cultural heritage tourism and site management. These include: (1) Local communities residing in and around the study area. (2) Tourism-related business operators, such as accommodation providers, restaurant owners, and tour operators. (3) Tourists, both domestic and international. (4) Government officials and policymakers involved in heritage

and tourism management. (4) Experts and academics in cultural heritage and tourism management. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience. Additionally, accidental sampling was used for tourist respondents. For qualitative data, approximately 30 key informants were selected for in-depth interviews. For quantitative data, survey questionnaires were distributed to tourists and local stakeholders to capture perceptions, attitudes, and opinions regarding tourism management and World Heritage development.

4. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected from both **primary and secondary sources** using multiple techniques:

4.1 Documentary Research: Secondary data were collected from academic literature, research reports, government documents, UNESCO guidelines, and policy frameworks related to cultural heritage and tourism management. This provided a theoretical and contextual foundation for the study.

4.2 Site Survey: Field surveys were conducted to examine the physical characteristics of the site, tourism facilities, infrastructure, and environmental conditions. Observations focused on spatial organization, visitor behavior, and site management practices.

4.3 Participant Observation: The researcher conducted participant observation to understand tourist activities, interactions, and perceptions of authenticity within the site. This method provided insights into real-time tourism experiences.

4.4 In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including community members, government officials, and tourism operators. The interviews explored issues related to tourism impacts, management challenges, stakeholder participation, and future development.

4.5 Questionnaire Survey: Structured questionnaires were administered to tourists and local stakeholders to collect quantitative data on attitudes, satisfaction, and perceptions regarding tourism management and World Heritage designation.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using **content analysis** and **thematic analysis**. The data were coded and categorized into key themes, such as tourism impacts, management challenges, stakeholder participation, and sustainability.

5.2 Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using **descriptive statistics**, including frequency, percentage, and mean values. The results were used to support and validate qualitative findings.

5.3 Data Triangulation: To ensure validity and reliability, **data triangulation** was applied by comparing findings from multiple data sources and methods. This approach strengthens the credibility of the research outcomes.

6. Research Framework

The study is guided by a conceptual framework that integrates key dimensions of tourism management in heritage contexts, including: Tourism attraction management, Facilities and service management, Environmental impact management, Social participation, Policy and administrative management. These dimensions are used as analytical indicators to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of tourism management at the study site.

7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

8. Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to certain limitations. First, the use of purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, data collection was conducted within a specific time frame, which may not fully capture seasonal variations in tourism patterns. Third, responses from participants may be influenced by subjective perceptions.

Research Results

1. Evaluation of World Heritage Assessment Process

Despite considerable study on cultural heritage tourism and World Heritage management, notable gaps persist. First, empirical studies are scarce about the amalgamation of conservation and tourist management within cultural landscape contexts, especially in Southeast Asia. Second, the part that local communities play in making decisions is often not studied enough. Third, further studies that focus on the specific problems that new World Heritage Sites face are needed. Consequently, this study enhances the literature by analyzing tourism management at Phu Phrabat Historical Park, emphasizing the interplay between cultural protection, tourism development, and community engagement within the World cultural context.

2. Stakeholder Perceptions toward World Heritage Nomination

Table 1: Public Opinion toward World Heritage Proposal (%)

No.	Issues	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
1	WH nomination proposal	82.95	12.10	4.95
2	Core area designation	83.87	13.53	2.60
3	Buffer zone designation	75.92	20.05	4.03
4	Master plan approval	87.48	11.35	1.17
5	Conservation plan	86.87	10.78	2.35
6	Archaeological research plan	86.62	10.10	3.28
7	Land-use plan	79.84	14.78	5.38
8	Public participation plan	85.12	11.78	3.10
9	Tourism & learning development	88.48	9.85	1.67
10	Public utilities development	87.55	9.85	2.60
11	Landscape development	87.37	9.35	3.28
12	Legal protection measures	80.17	13.20	6.63
13	Value promotion plan	84.27	11.95	3.78

The table depicts stakeholder opinions regarding several facets of World Heritage nomination and management, indicating a predominant consensus across all concerns, with support surpassing 75% in each area. The greatest consensus is noted in tourism and learning development (88.48%), public utilities development (87.55%), master plan approval (87.48%), and landscape development (87.37%), signifying that stakeholders emphatically prioritize tourism expansion, infrastructure enhancement, and strategic planning as essential factors for World Heritage success. Likewise, conservation-related elements, such as the conservation strategy (86.87%) and archaeological research plan (86.62%), garner substantial approval, indicating an acknowledgment of the significance of heritage preservation. Public participation (85.12%) and value promotion (84.27%) are evaluated positively, underscoring the significance of community engagement in sustainable management. Nevertheless, comparatively elevated levels of dissent are observed in buffer zone designation (20.05%), land-use planning (14.78%), and legal protection measures (13.20%), indicating apprehensions over spatial governance, regulatory constraints, and possible repercussions on local livelihoods. Although stakeholders predominantly endorse the World Heritage nomination (82.95%) and core area designation (83.87%), these results suggest that effective execution necessitates meticulous management of land-use policies, transparent communication, and inclusive stakeholder engagement to reconcile conservation goals with community interests.

3. Visualization of Stakeholder Agreement Levels

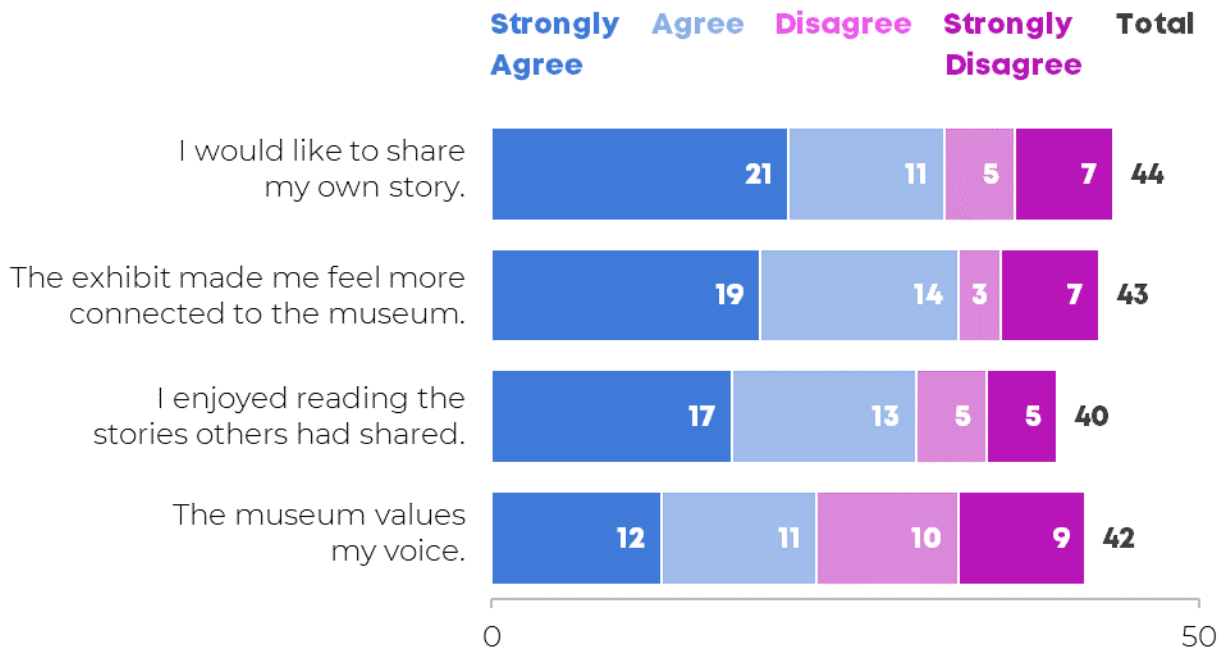
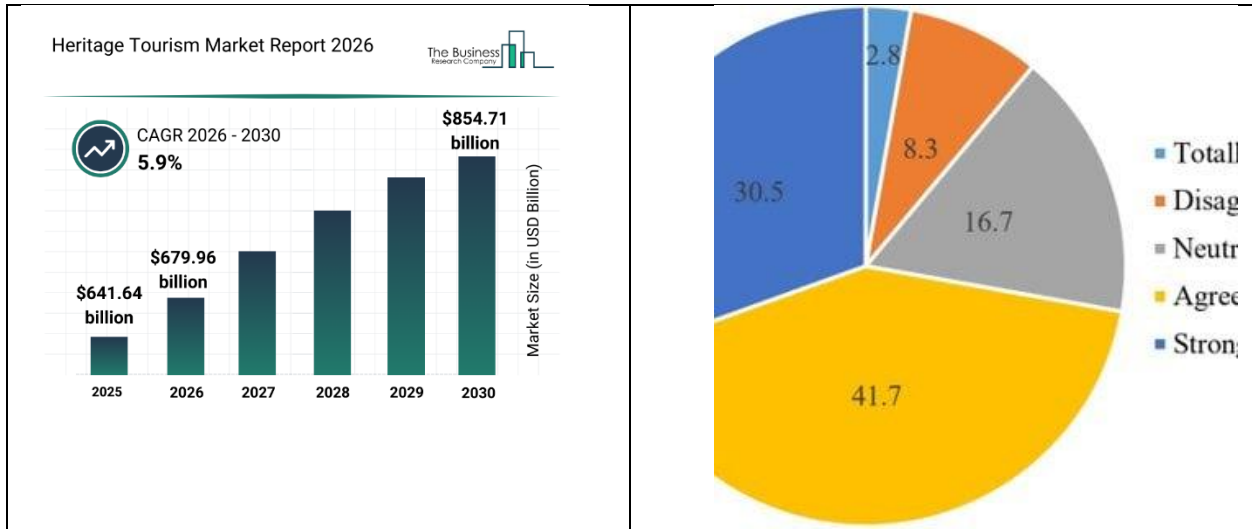


Figure 3: Visualization of Stakeholder Agreement Levels

The findings provide substantial overall endorsement for the World Heritage nomination and its related management strategies, with agreement rates surpassing 80% across the majority of indicators, signifying robust stakeholder confidence in the proposed development framework. The greatest consensus is observed in the tourism and learning development plan (88.48%), followed by public utilities and infrastructure development (87.55%) and the master plan for conservation and development (87.48%), underscoring the significance attributed to tourism expansion and strategic planning. The greatest levels of dissent are linked to buffer zone designation (20.05%), land-use planning (14.78%), and legal and regulatory protective measures (13.20%). The findings indicate that while stakeholders generally endorse

tourist growth, significant concerns persist over spatial governance and regulatory structures, especially concerning land rights and the possible effects on local lives.

4. Community Participation and Local Engagement

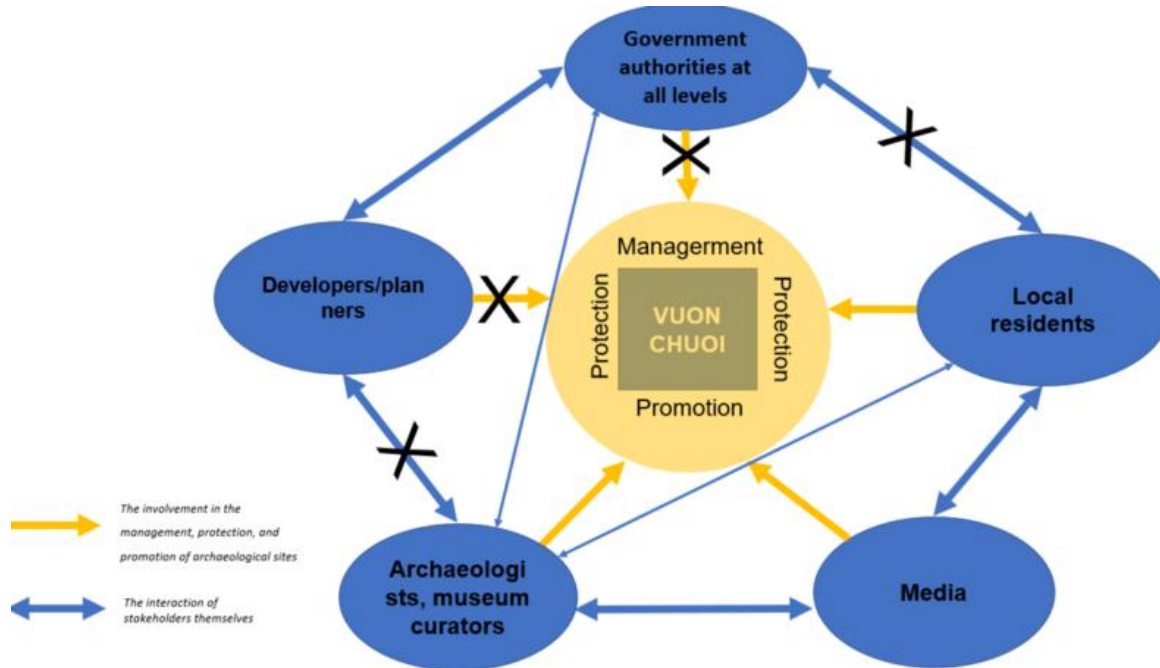


Figure 4 Community Participation and Local Engagement

The study underscores that community involvement is a vital element of sustainable heritage management, stressing the necessity for inclusive and collaborative methodologies. Three key dimensions of participation were identified:

4.1 Awareness and Knowledge Development

This pillar emphasizes enhancing public comprehension and valuation of cultural heritage by systematic knowledge generation and distribution. It encompasses the creation of cultural heritage databases that aggregate archeological, historical, and cultural data, with the formulation of educational curricula and learning resources to facilitate both formal and informal education. Furthermore, advocating for local research and incorporating community knowledge aids in the preservation of intangible heritage and cultivates a sense of ownership among local stakeholders. This strategy increases awareness and fosters enduring support for conservation initiatives.

4.2 Participatory Planning and Development

This feature underscores the significance of engaging many stakeholders in decision-making processes concerning heritage management and tourism development. Cooperative planning among governmental entities, local communities, and pertinent organizations guarantees the inclusion of varied perspectives. The incorporation of cultural assets into urban and land-use planning preserves the integrity of heritage sites while addressing development requirements. Moreover, the establishment of tourism routes linking heritage sites with adjacent villages fosters local economic prospects and enhances cultural connections within the region.

4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

This dimension underscores the necessity for efficient mechanisms to monitor and evaluate heritage management operations. The initiative entails the formation of local committees and volunteer networks that engage in the oversight of conservation and development activities. The establishment of monitoring systems and operating guidelines guarantees uniformity and responsibility in management procedures. The establishment of integrated data systems facilitates ongoing monitoring, assessment, and informed decision-making. These techniques facilitate adaptive management and promote the enduring sustainability of heritage resources.

These findings indicate that participatory governance not only fortifies cultural protection but also amplifies socio-economic advantages for local populations, closely coinciding with the tenets of sustainable tourism development.

5. Institutional and Policy Framework

The results show that good heritage management needs significant coordination between institutions at all levels, including national, provincial, and municipal authorities that work together clearly and consistently. At the national level, government agencies are in charge of developing policies, legal frameworks, and strategic plans that follow international criteria like the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Authorities at the provincial and local levels are very important for putting these policies into action, running day-to-day operations, and working with communities. The analysis underscores the necessity for a specialized institution solely tasked with World Heritage management to guarantee continuity, specialization, and efficient coordination among stakeholders. Also, long-term strategic planning is necessary for sustainable development since it helps to balance the needs of conservation with the increase of tourism and infrastructure over time. It is also important to include heritage management in national and regional development plans. This makes sure that historical protection is not done in a vacuum, but is part of larger socio-economic and spatial planning frameworks. Also, strong legal frameworks, such as laws that protect heritage, zoning rules, and land-use controls, are important for keeping heritage sites' integrity, authenticity, and Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) protected. These rules assist in stopping bad development, limiting environmental damage, and provide stakeholders with clear instructions, which helps with long-term and strong heritage management.

6. Integrated Management Model for Sustainable Development

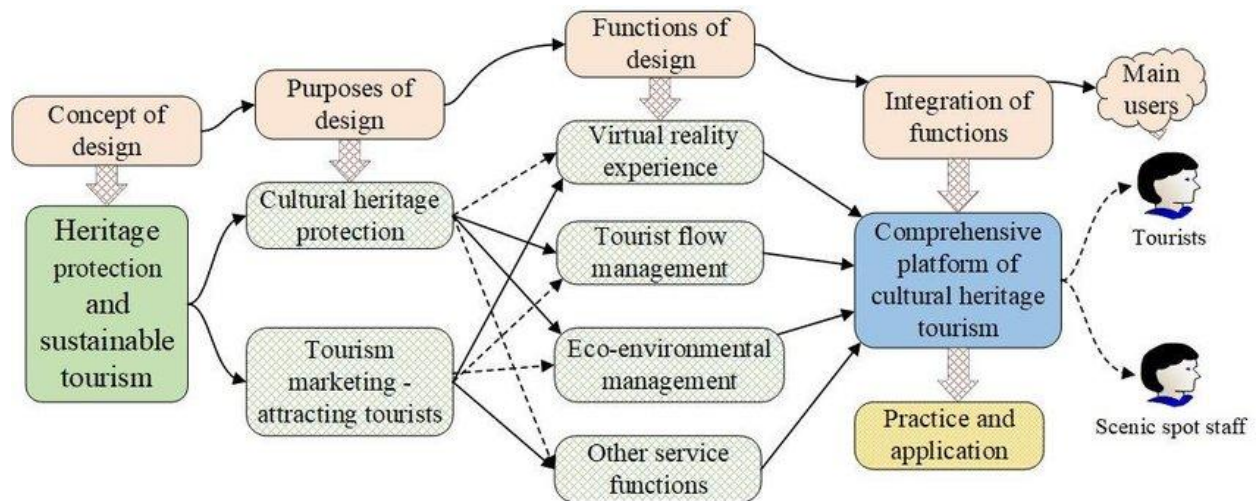


Figure 5 Integrated Management Model for Sustainable Development

The study proposes an integrated management framework consisting of seven key components:

1. Concept of Design: Heritage Protection and Sustainable Tourism

The model begins with the concept of design, which is fundamentally grounded in the principles of heritage protection and sustainable tourism. This concept emphasizes that any development related to

cultural heritage must prioritize the conservation of its values while ensuring that tourism activities do not compromise its integrity. It reflects a balanced approach where preservation and utilization coexist, forming the foundation for all subsequent planning and implementation processes.

2. Purposes of Design

The purposes of design are divided into two main objectives: cultural heritage protection and tourism marketing. Cultural heritage protection focuses on safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage values, ensuring their authenticity and long-term preservation. At the same time, tourism marketing aims to attract visitors by enhancing the visibility and appeal of the heritage site. These dual purposes highlight the need to align conservation goals with economic and tourism development strategies.

3. Functions of Design

The model identifies several key functions that operationalize the design purposes. These include virtual reality experiences, which enhance interpretation and visitor engagement; tourist flow management, which helps regulate visitor numbers and reduce overcrowding; eco-environmental management, which ensures environmental sustainability; and other service functions that support visitor needs. Together, these functions translate conceptual goals into practical mechanisms for managing heritage tourism effectively.

4. Integration of Functions into a Comprehensive Platform

All design functions are integrated into a comprehensive platform of cultural heritage tourism. This platform acts as a central system that connects various components, including technology, management strategies, and service delivery. The integration ensures that different functions do not operate in isolation but work together to create a cohesive and efficient management system, enhancing both conservation outcomes and visitor experiences.

5. Practice and Application

The model emphasizes the importance of applying the integrated platform in real-world contexts. This involves implementing the designed systems and strategies within heritage sites, adapting them to specific local conditions, and continuously improving them through feedback and evaluation. Practical application ensures that theoretical concepts are translated into tangible results that support sustainable heritage management.

6. Main Users: Tourists and Site Staff

Finally, the model identifies the main users of the system as tourists and scenic site staff. Tourists benefit from improved experiences, better interpretation, and enhanced accessibility, while site staff gain tools for more efficient management and monitoring. By addressing the needs of both groups, the model ensures that the system supports not only visitor satisfaction but also effective site administration, ultimately contributing to sustainable tourism development.

Discussion

The results of this study give us crucial information about how hard it is to manage tourism at Phu Phrabat Historical Park because it is a World Heritage site. Similar to what other studies have found, the results show that World Heritage designation can help tourism grow, brand a destination, and boost the economy. However, it can also make it harder to protect the site, manage it, and work with different groups (Yang et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2011). The high level of agreement among stakeholders in this study, especially about tourist growth, infrastructure improvement, and strategic planning, shows that tourism is seen as a major factor in regional development. Richards (2018) and McKercher and du Cros (2002) say that cultural heritage tourism makes destinations more competitive and helps local economies. This is in line with what they say.

The data also show that there are conflicts between development and conservation, especially when it comes to designating buffer zones, planning land use, and putting in place legal protections. These worries are part of a bigger debate in the literature on heritage tourism about the conflict between using heritage for commercial gain and protecting it (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Garrod & Fyall, 2000). The considerable level of dissent in these domains indicates that stakeholders are apprehensive about the

prospective effects of regulatory frameworks on land rights and local livelihoods. Timothy and Boyd (2003) say that this is true because local people typically see heritage management regulations as limiting when they aren't involved enough in making decisions.

The research underscores the essential function of community involvement in attaining sustainable heritage management. The stated dimensions of participation—awareness and knowledge building, participatory planning, and monitoring mechanisms—support the premise that inclusive governance promotes both conservation outcomes and socio-economic benefits (UNESCO, 2011; Farid, 2015). Özgeriş (2024) also supports this conclusion by saying that getting people involved in heritage protection makes them feel like they own it and are committed to it for the long run. In the case of Phu Phrabat, participatory methods are especially significant because it is a cultural landscape, and the site's worth comes from the beliefs, customs, and practices of the people who live there.

The results underscore the significance of multi-level governance and coordinated planning within institutional and policy frameworks. The necessity for a specialized agency, enduring strategic planning, and incorporation into national and regional development frameworks exemplifies the characteristics of good heritage governance delineated in the literature (Pedersen, 2002; UNESCO, 2019). Weak institutional coordination and fragmented policies are significant obstacles to sustainable heritage management, especially in developing nations (Coimbra et al., 2025). To keep the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of heritage sites, it is important to develop the ability of institutions and make sure that policies are consistent.

Furthermore, the proposed integrated management model in this study enhances the literature by amalgamating design-oriented methodologies, technological advancements, and stakeholder involvement into a cohesive framework. The addition of features like virtual reality, managing tourist flow, and managing the environment shows how heritage tourism is changing. Digital technologies and smart management systems are being used more and more to improve visitor experiences and support conservation (Zhang et al., 2022). This corresponds with recent studies highlighting the significance of adaptable and innovative management practices in tackling the problems of World Heritage tourism.

Overall, the results support the idea that just adding a site to the World Heritage List does not guarantee long-term benefits. Instead, success depends on the ability to balance conservation and growth through democratic governance, strong institutional frameworks, and integrated management systems. This study enhances the current literature by offering empirical information from a Southeast Asian cultural setting, thereby filling gaps concerning community engagement and context-specific heritage management. It also has real-world effects for policymakers and practitioners, showing how important it is to plan for everyone, communicate clearly, and be flexible in order to protect World Heritage sites for the long run.

Recommendations

This study's findings lead to numerous suggestions for improving the sustainable tourist management of Phu Phrabat Historical Park in light of its World Heritage classification.

1. Policy-Level Recommendations

At the policy level, it is important to create a clear and consistent national strategy for managing World Heritage sites that combines conservation with tourism growth. To make sure that World Heritage sites are always open, well-coordinated, and up to international standards, the government should set up a separate agency or specialized unit to supervise them. Heritage management should also be included in national and regional development plans to encourage policy alignment across sectors, such as tourism, the environment, and urban planning. It is also important to strengthen legislative frameworks, especially those that deal with land-use control, buffer zone management, and heritage preservation, in order to conserve the site's integrity and Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

2. Institutional and Management Recommendations

To maintain history well, everyone involved needs to work together better. It is suggested to create a unified management system that makes it easier for federal agencies, local governments, communities,

and businesses to work together. Setting up a central management body or coordination center can assist make decisions faster and bring institutions together. Capacity-building initiatives should also be put in place to help people who work in heritage conservation, tourism management, and the process of nominating World Heritage sites learn more and improve their skills.

3. Community Participation and Social Development

Because local communities are so important, participative approaches should be improved by making planning and decision-making procedures more open to everyone. It is suggested to encourage community-based tourist projects that allow local people to make money while also helping to protect the environment. To make people feel that they own and are responsible for heritage resources, public awareness programs, educational activities, and the use of local knowledge should all be enhanced. There should also be ways to settle conflicts to deal with worries about land-use limits and regulatory frameworks.

4. Tourism Management and Visitor Control

To deal with the problems that come with more visitors, it is best to use sustainable tourism management techniques, including controlling visitor flow, zoning systems, and carrying capacity assessments. When building tourism infrastructure, it's important to plan properly so that it doesn't hurt the environment or culture. Also, adding other types of tourism activities, such as cultural interpretation programs, learning-based tourism, and community tourism routes, can help spread out the load on visitors and improve their overall experience.

5. Technological and Innovation-Based Development

The promotion of digital technology is essential to enhance conservation and tourism development. Instruments like virtual reality (VR), digital heritage platforms, and intelligent tourism systems can augment interpretation, elevate tourist engagement, and alleviate physical strain on delicate regions. Moreover, data-driven management systems must be established to track visitor behavior, environmental conditions, and management efficacy, facilitating adaptive and evidence-based decision-making.

6. Research and Future Studies

Future studies should concentrate on the long-term assessment of tourism impacts and the efficacy of management systems at World Heritage sites. Comparative analyses with other World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia would yield significant insights into optimal practices and adaptable management frameworks. Moreover, additional study is required to investigate the socio-economic effects of World Heritage status on local communities, especially concerning equity, livelihood transformation, and cultural sustainability.

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