



***A SWOT Analysis of the Development
of Cultural Tourism in Hong Kong***

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A SWOT Analysis of the Development of Cultural Tourism in HK

A) Foreword - The prevalence of Cultural Tourism in HK, Macau and as a World Trend

When one browses through the websites of the tourism bureaux of Hong Kong and Macau (namely “HK Tourism Board” and “Macau Government Tourist Office” respectively), he may be amazed by the fact that the two places are both increasingly enthusiastic about publicizing their rich cultural assets like historical monuments, old traditional rituals and relics to their target visitors.

In the case of HK, while 2006 is named as “the Discover Hong Kong Year”, a new cultural highlight “Culture and Heritage Celebration” is added on top of the existing programmes. The 18-day event held in Central, the heart of the city, spared no effort in showcasing the traditional Chinese festivals and local celebrations that date back centuries ago to the visitors.

At the same time, “Ngong Ping 360”, a new religious attraction nestling on Lantau, is scheduled to be opened in June in the same year. The Buddhist-themed establishment is expected to complement the Big Buddha Statue and brings about “a journey of enlightenment” (as claimed by HK Tourism Board) to tourists.

In the case of Macau, since “the Historic Centre of Macau”, which spans 8 squares (e.g. the St. Augustine’s Square) and 22 historic buildings (e.g., A-Ma Temple), was successfully inscribed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on 15th July 2005, Macau simply names 2006 as “Macau World Heritage Year”, suggesting a year-long program in celebration of its rich historic monuments. All these testify to the fact that cultural tourism is playing a more than ever prominent role on the promotion agendas of both governments.

This phenomenon is, nevertheless, understandable and predictable as according to research done by World Tourism Organisation, cultural tourism accounts for 37% of all tourist trips and the demand is increasing by 15% per annum. (Antolovic, 1999).

Mckercher, a HK expert in Cultural Tourism, even summarizes the scenario by claiming that “arguably, cultural tourism has superceded ecotourism as the trendy tourism buzzword.” (Mckercher 2005). A comprehensive study on the subject is therefore essential to the planning and policy formulation in the future.

B) A Study of “Cultural Tourism”

i) When - The Origin and Historical development of “Cultural Tourism”

Origin 1: As early as the days of the Romans

The origin of “Cultural tourism” has been varied. Some scholars believe that people indeed have been traveling for what we call cultural tourism today as early as the days of the Romans. This is simply because in many people’s eyes, “all travel involves a cultural element” (Mckercher 2000). Whether it’s visiting historic sites, cultural landmarks, attending special events, etc, people are always “removed from their home culture and placed temporarily in a different cultural milieu when they travel”. In other words, cultural tourism germinated at the same time as travel commenced and has had a long history.

Origin 2: The Grand Tour in Europe in 17th century

Some other scholars tend to associate the origin of “Cultural Tourism” with the “Grand Tour” prevalent in Europe in the 17th century, when sons and daughters of the British aristocracy were sent abroad to travel throughout Europe (such as Italy, Greece and Germany) for two to three years, with a view to widening their horizons and improving their knowledge.

According to *Le Grand Tour*, a Grand Tourist should “*embrace the facets of foreign culture including language, history, geography, climate, crops, food, clothes, customs, politics, laws, art, architecture, and trade regulations*”. They were also expected to develop relationships with foreigners, maintain these relationships, and upon return to England, continue correspondence with their newfound friends.

As the trip helped the young aristocrats to develop their social and intellectual skills, one will return from his travels with “a broadened mind” as well as “a good command of foreign languages”, “a new self-reliance and self-possession” as well as “a highly developed taste and grace of manners”. The Grand Tour, as time went by, became fashionable and eventually, part of the necessary education and training for the future administrators and political leaders to prepare for a career, especially during the later half of the 18th century.

Cultural tourism began to be recognized as a separate product category in the late 1970s, when tourism researchers realized that tourism was pursued by a small number of “better educated, more affluent tourists” who traveled with a specific intention to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and heritage of a destination.” (Tighe 1986). This specialized activity gradually developed and became recognized for what it is, i.e., a high profile but mass-market activity nowadays.



A cultural tourist capturing the essence of traditional Chinese religions.

ii) What - Definitions of “Cultural Heritage” and “Cultural Tourism”

Before we could get a full picture of “cultural tourism”, we need to understand what “cultural heritage” is. It is because the latter is the travel motivator and resources that cultural tourism capitalizes upon. Without defining what it is, we do not know what motivates cultural tourists and what they are looking for in the tourism activities. .

According to LORD cultural resources, cultural heritage

“records and expresses the long processes of historic development, forming the essence of diverse national, regional and indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. The particular heritage and collective memory of each locality or community is irreplaceable and an important foundation for development, both now and into the future”.

From the above, we can understand that heritage is a part of our historical past and carries our collective memories. Heritage items and antiquities help us define our cultural identity and enrich our cityscape, which are all important to the betterment and development of individuals and communities. .

ii) “Cultural Tourism”

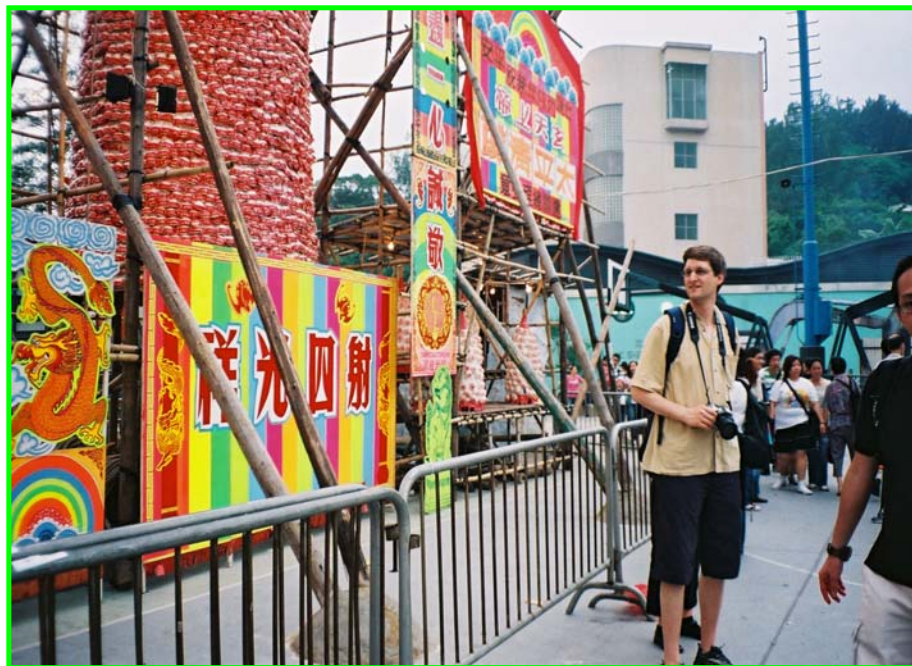
There are numerous definitions of “cultural tourism” documented by different organizations. For instance, according to Wisconsin Heritage Tourism Program, cultural tourism is “the practice of traveling to experience historic and cultural attractions to learn about a community’s heritage in an enjoyable and educational way.”

LORD Cultural Resources, another authoritative organization in US, deem cultural tourism” as “visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific, or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution.”

Concluding the above, we can see cultural tourism is not merely an economic activity but a journey that promises joy, enlightenment, spiritual growth and self betterment through interaction with different cultural elements.



*Spreading the art of Chinese tea-brewing to an interested foreign visitor.
Showing admiration towards the giant bun tower*



iii) Why - The importance of “Cultural Tourism”

We integrate what we have learnt about the socio-cultural impact of tourism from the text books and the literature review we have done on line and in the library. Eventually we come up with four positive impacts of cultural tourism on society.

1. A Promise of Personal Growth and Global Perspective

The National Endowments for the Arts of US once suggests that cultural attractions

“educate, elevate and entertain travellers nationwide”.

(ICOMOS, 1999).

Serving similar functions like the Grand Tour prevalent among the aristocrats in the 17th century, cultural tourism allows one to be immersed and gain brand new experience of arts, customs that are all evidence of human history and have evolved for ages. Gradually he becomes well conversant in religion, geography, world history, arts and a better understanding of the human civilization is developed.

A similar perception is reaffirmed by Craik, who claims, “tourism is a process of seeing and experiencing the other, but it is not about otherness, except as a means of coming to terms with one’s own culture.” (Craik, 1997:115)

When pursuing a cultural activity in a foreign country, whether it is a visit to a museum, an arts festival, a heritage site, a performance or an historic building, one is exposed to the lifestyle of the local people which is something new to him. He might be inspired to compare that aspect of cultural asset with that of his own culture and reflect on his own. A better understanding of his own and other’s culture can be achieved.



Participating in the traditional rituals is the best way to experience the local culture.



2. A Promise of Cultural Pride and Cultural Identity

While the cultural tourists may enjoy a sense of enhanced self esteem brought about by his new cultural experience, the local residents of the host communities may be enlightened to re-discover the admirable aspects of their own culture, especially when they witness how their own cultural assets are appreciated by the foreign visitors. There is a revived or reinforced sense of cultural identity to their own community.

Moreover, the cultural assets that the two parties are keen on bridge up the cultural difference between the two parties. The reciprocal empowerment between the cultural tourists and local residents help to enhance international understanding and harmony. .

3. A Promise of Economic Gains

According to a landmark report “The Profile of Travelers who Participate in Historic and Cultural Activities”, commissioned by The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) in 1997, cultural travelers display the following traits:-

1. They spend more money (US\$615 per trip) than the average US traveler (US\$425)
2. They are more likely to stay at tourism accommodation: (56% vs. 42%)
3. They travel for longer periods of time (4.7 nights vs. 3.3 nights)

These findings are in line with the results of the National Travel Survey carried out by the same organization in the next year, which document that cultural tourists

1. Have higher average household incomes (US\$48000 vs. US\$37000)
2. Have managerial or professional occupations

The high education and income demographics shown by the cultural



*Exposure to a foreign culture is fun,
while promising a broadened mind
and self-perfection.*

tourists promise greater affordability to travel whereas their longer stay at

the destinations suggests more revenue generated for the host communities. Economic development can be boosted.

To our strong belief, this economic implication is particularly significant to developing countries like Cambodia, South America, in which tourism plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation.

4. A Promise of Heritage Conservation and Sustainability

The high education demographics of cultural tourists also suggest a greater concern and brighter future for environment and heritage conservation. In order to capitalize upon the cultural assets, any tourist destination hoping to attract more cultural tourists will allocate more funding and resources on the preservation and protection of historical relics, monuments and other intangible art forms like Cantonese opera.

Moreover, cultural tourism also provides incentive for “cleaning up” the overall environment for the comfort of these tourists. The locals thus can benefit from these controls of water pollution, garbage disposal, etc and enjoy a better living environment at the same time.



Vendors selling mascots and souvenirs of the religious events – illustrating how tourism rejuvenates local economy.

C) A SWOT analysis of the development of “Cultural Tourism” in

HK

What is SWOT analysis?

According to NetMBA, a **SWOT analysis** “is a simple framework for generating strategic alternatives from a situation analysis.”

Credited to Albert Humphrey, who led a research project at [Stanford University](#) in the 1960s and '70s. the SWOT analysis classifies the internal aspects of the company or a situation as “strengths” or “weaknesses” whereas the external situational factors as “opportunities” or “threats”, which are then presented in the form of a matrix

Strengths are attributes of the organization or situation that are helpful to the achievement of the objective.

Weaknesses are attributes that are harmful to the achievement of the objective.

Opportunities are *external* conditions that are helpful to the achievement of the objective.

Threats are *external* conditions that are harmful to the achievement of the objective.

By analyzing and understanding these four aspects of its situation, one can better leverage its strengths, correct its weaknesses, capitalize on golden opportunities and deter further devastating threats. As the SWOT analysis concentrates on the issues that potentially have the most impact, it is a powerful tool of addressing a complex strategic situation.

In view of the strong analytical power of the SWOT analysis, we attempt to fit in this framework into the case of the development of cultural tourism in HK and examine the four elements in detail. It is hoped that the study can help identify shed light on the direction and pave way for better policy formulation.

i) Strengths of cultural tourism development in the context of Hong Kong

A Diverse Exuberance of Cultural Attractions

a) A Rich Colonial Past

Since the return of sovereignty to mainland in 1997, Hong Kong has become part of mainland China. Many of the old colonial buildings in the territory thus become evidence of Hong Kong's past history. These buildings witness the historical development of Hong Kong from a British colony into a Special Administrative Region and document the different life style we once had. In short, they are part of our collective memory of the past.

1. Central Police Station Compound

(Address: No10, Hollywood Road, Central)

The Central Police Station Compound is one of the oldest declared monuments in colonial style in Hong Kong. The Compound consists of three buildings, namely the Central Police Station, Victoria Prison and the Former Central Magistracy Among them, the barrack is the oldest as it dates back to 1864, whereas the other two are added between 1910-1925.

The group of buildings is all 4-storey high and built in the classical style, with the whole of the front and the main architectural features of the back constructed of cement plastic. The extension facing Hollywood Road is noted for its brick construction and imposing columns in the entrance hall.

The three buildings is a group of historical architecture representing the law and order of Hong Kong.



The Central Police Station Compound - a symbol of law and order in HK.

2. Flagstaff House

(Address: Cotton Tree Drive, Central)

Not far from the Central Police Station Compound is Flagstaff House, another declared monument nestling in tranquility at the Hong Kong Park. Built in 1846, it had been used as the residence of the Commander of the British Force in Hong Kong until 1932. It now houses the Museum of Tea Ware.

The elegant verandah and white color make the House look so relaxed, which truly reflects the colonial style of architecture prominent before 1997 and sets as a strong contrast to the glass-wall skyscrapers that can be found in the same district.



A glimpse at the main entrance of Flagstaff House.





The colonial-style Commander's residence is now turned to a Teaware Museum



3. Wanchai Market

(Address: Wanchai Road, Wanchai)

Not far from Central is a district called Wanchai, a mixing pot of the old and new. In this district, one can find Wanchai Market, the only remaining historic monument built in the world famous Bauhaus style in HK.

Bauhaus architecture was founded by Walter Gropius and developed in Germany in the 1920s. Bauhaus buildings are usually cubic, favor right angles, (although some feature rounded corners and balconies); they have smooth facades and an open floor plan.

There are a number of characteristics to the Bauhaus Style of architecture:

- 1) It shuns ornamentation and favors functionality
- 2) Uses asymmetry and regularity versus symmetry
- 3) It grasps architecture in terms of space versus mass

Wanchai Market is the only Bauhaus building remaining in HK and also one of the last two Bauhaus buildings in Asia. Truly reflecting the Bauhaus style, it is basically triangular in shape but with rounded corners and balconies. There is no decoration but simplicity plays the major tone in the market. There is also a basement and dormitory for the staff inside.



Tel Aviv, a garden suburb built in Bauhaus style in Israel, was inscribed as a world heritage site by UNESCO in 2003 as a 20th century phenomenon. In what way does it look similar to our Wanchai Market?



The exterior and interior of the Bauhaus-styled Wanchai Market – no decoration but functional enough

b) The Nostalgic Clan Culture in the New Territories

1) Ping Shan Cultural Trail

The Ping Shan Heritage Trail is the first Cultural Trail in HK and many of the antiquities have been inscribed as declared monuments. Inaugurated on 12 December 1993, this 1-km long trail links together a number of antiquities belonging to the Tang clan in easy walking distance.

The origin of the Tang Clan can be traced back to the Sung Dynasty (960 - 1279 A.D.). The Tang Clan is the earliest known settlers of HK and also the largest and most powerful of the “Five Great Clans” in the New Territories.

As the people of Tang Clan were so rich and powerful, numerous elegant structures built in those days remain today, bearing testimony to historical and social development over the past centuries. At the same time, they provide visitors with an opportunity to recapture aspects of life in the New Territories in the old days in a convenient half-day excursion.

Unique Monuments along the Trail

1. Tsui Sing Lau Pagoda (The Star Gathering Pagoda)

Built in around 1486, Tsui Sing Lau Pagoda is a hexagonal building constructed of green bricks and granite in Chinese style. It is also the major attraction along the Ping Shan Cultural Trail as it is the only ancient pagoda one can find in HK now.

The pagoda was believed to be erected so as to protect the village from evil influences coming from the north. There are also stories that the clan people took their children to the pagoda as they believed this act could please the gods and help their children pass the Imperial Examination.

The pagoda originally had seven storeys. But the upper part was collapsed twice and it was then advised by geomancers to leave it as it stands. Therefore the pagoda remains to a 3-storey building.



Gathering Star Pagoda - The last remaining pagoda in HK was meant to defeat the bad influence from the north as early as in the Sung Dynasty.



The Tang Ancestral Hall

Tang Ancestral Hall is one of the three major attractions of the Trail. Built in 1273, the exquisitely decorated three-hall building contains many historical inscriptions and the roof is decorated with ceramic figurines. All these features are testimony to the earlier wealth and power of the Tang clan.

Outside the hall are several vertical scholar stones commemorating clan members who passed the imperial examinations and two drum platforms on either side of the entrance are where musicians perform during festivities.

Wandering around inside, visitors can also admire the ancient wooden ancestral tablets and the roof beam carvings. They all truly reflect wealth of the Tang Clan and the architectural style in the ancient times.

Functions of Ancestral Halls

The Ancestral Hall serves many functions in a clan. In the first place, it is where the altars and soul tablets of ancestors are housed. From time to time, a big feast will be set before the ancestors' tablets. It is believed that the ancestors can extract the essence of the food and drink, leaving the descendents to enjoy the real food themselves. Sharing food with their ancestors gives the clan people a feeling of closeness and unity. The clan spirit thus can be sustained.

The ancestral hall is not only a place for worshipping ancestors but it also acts as a council chamber for settling disputes. Whenever there is a dispute, the elders, who are highly respected figures in the clan, will be summoned to the ancestral hall to pursue justice.

The Tang Ancestral Hall with its shelves of ancestral tablets - a document of the clan's history.





The dragon fish on the roof can help student to pass the imperial examination with flying colours.

Architecture features full of symbolic meanings -

The pair of Door gods looks fierce and is meant to keep evil spirits away from the house.





The once colourfully decorated exterior and interior of the ancestral hall testify the power and glory of the Tang Clan in the past.



3. [Yeung Hau Temple](#)

Yeung Hau Temple is dedicated to Yeung Hau Wong, the bodyguard to the last Sung emperor who met his end in Hong Kong. Yeung is highly

respected for his loyalty to the Emperor, an attribute much stressed in Confucian principles in traditional Chinese culture.

Apart from Yeung, one can see the figurines of many other local deities like the Earth God, Kitchen God, etc housing near the same temple. This reflects the high compatibility of Chinese religions as different gods can live together in harmony.

4. Sheung Cheung Wai

Sheung Cheung Wai is a walled village built about 100 years ago. The gatehouse with its shrine is still intact. Visitors can walk along and see many traditional houses

5. Kun Ting Study Hall

Kun Ting Study Hall was built for students preparing for the Imperial Civil Service Examination. The elegant decoration reflects how the clan people saw passing the Imperial Examination as their No. 1 concern.

Despite serving different functions, the architectural style of these buildings reflect the beliefs and spiritual aspects of the time.

For instance, the Clan Hall is always the outward manifestation of the pride, strength and economic power of a clan. The pair of pottery fish commonly found on the roof, known as the dragon fish, represents literary eminence and passing examinations with distinction.



Worshipped at the Yeung Hau Temple are some other gods and deities reflecting the Chinese is a polytheistic community.



Door gods are usually painted on the inside of the main doors so as to keep evil spirits away

c) **The Exotic Polytheistic Rituals**

Hong Kong has been famous for its modernity and vitality. But at the core of Hong Kong's vitality lies a culture and traditions that could not be more Chinese.

From a religious perspective, we can say Hong Kong is a polytheistic city, meaning the people worship many gods and deities. Indeed, there are about 600 temples, shrines, and monasteries throughout the territory, many combining the detached view of life offered by Buddhism, the humility and non-assertiveness of Taoism and the high principles of Confucianism.

On a household level, we also have different gods governing Fortune (the God of Fortune), the Hell (King of the Ghost), the Sea (Queen of Heaven), the earth (Tou Di) and even the kitchen (the Kitchen God), etc. All these gods are worshipped and honoured for their redeeming and blessing qualities. On different occasions, we can always see devotees burning incense sticks with food and paper offerings made to their gods.

These traditional rituals may seem superstitious on the surface. But they are actually wonderful ornaments in people's daily lives. They provide spiritual support and peace of mind to the people and. At the same time, they are intangible heritage handed down from generation to generation by our ancestors.

Watching and participating in these religious events help the cultural tourists understand the spiritual aspect of the clan and visualize what life of the community was like in the past.



Religion brings about a sense of security and "being looked after" to the worshippers.

1. Temple Parade (Jiu festival)

“Temple Parade” is a form of sacrificing and worshipping activity performed by certain communities to give thanks for the blessing of a deity and pray for peace. It is usually organized by a village or cluster of villages to cleanse the area of any ill-disposed evil spirits and to renew the community’s tie with the gods so that peace and harmony can be restored.

During the festival, all deities will be invited and worshipped by the villagers at a specially built altar. In order to thank them for watching over the village and ask them to continue to do so, the villagers will treat the deities to sumptuous food and an opera.

In many westerners’ eyes, the most exotic feature of this religious event is the huge and dramatic effigy of “Yim Lo Wong”, the King of Hell, who is constructed on a bamboo frame with coloured paper. Beside him will be “Poon Goon”, which means “the judge”, who will carry a pen and mark down the names of trouble-makers among the ghosts. They will be displayed on the street for public worship for a few days.

On the last day before the King of Hell returns, he will be put in a cart pushed by only the male descendents of the community and walk around the village. This act symbolizes that he has swallowed all the hungry ghosts in the vicinity, bringing peace to the community before he is sent back to hell in a flame on the last night.

In Hong Kong , the most famous “Jiu” is the “Tai Ping Ching Jiu” held on Cheung Chau Island every year. On top of the Parade of the King of Hell, one can find a procession of children colorfully dressed like Chinese traditional figures in parade. However, one can also find temple parades also held at different districts in the New Territories.



Offering to the wild ghosts - reflecting how the Chinese respect gods but are afraid of evil spirits.



The different gods live in harmony in Chinese tradition.



How come the effigies of King of Hell look so different in Cheung Chau and Sheung Shui.

The Jade Emperor and King of Ghost, who has a big tummy because he has eaten the hungry ghosts.



The Jade Emperor and the Queen of Heaven - both deities are highly respected by the fishermen.



The Ghost Messengers and the Earth God.



The colourfully costumed children are helping to pass on the traditional rituals to the next generation.



After parading and blessing the whole village, the King of Hell will be sent back to Hell in a flame.



2. Bun Festival

Said to have a hundred years of history, the festival itself is a combination of praying to gods, ganging together, and navigating the lost spirits.

Every year in May, three bun towers will be erected outside the Temple of

North Emperor, another well respected deity among fishermen on Cheung Chau. The buns are believed to have been blessed by different gods.

All people on the Island must keep vegetarian diet for three days, until the last day when a colorful procession is held. When midnight comes, tens of young men hurried up to the three bun towers, tear off all the buns, put them in bag or spread them over the crowd. This kind of activity was ceased after an accident in 1978, when the bamboo structure of the bun tower bent in the middle and half fell.

However, the Festival was revived since 2005 and again brings life to the island.

The Bun Tower where the exciting game will take place





Curiosity is one of the travel motivators in cultural tourism.

3. Worshipping the Wishing tree at Lam Village in Tai Po

The Lam's Village is a 200-year-old settlement not far from Tai Po. Standing at the entrance of the village is the famous wishing tree that dates back to 50 years ago. Legend has it that a boat dweller was sick for

a long time. Then one day after praying in front of a tree, he had a speedy recovery miraculously. This news soon spread to the whole village and worshippers, believing that the tree was a deity, paid homage to it and make wishes. The Tree was known as “the Wishing Tree” ever since then.

To make one’s wish come true, the worshipper must first write his name and wishes on a paper offering. Then he needs to wrap it up, tie it in an orange with a string, and then throw it up onto the tree. It is believed that one’s wish will be granted if the paper offering got hung on a branch.



The Lam's village – an old traditional village which gets famous because of the wishing tree.

4) The Birthday of the Goddess of Mercy

The Goddess of Mercy in Chinese culture is like Holy Mary in Christianity in the sense that both are well respected for their compassion and pity on mortals. Both are keen to rescue people in distress and suffering.

Of the many temples dedicated to her, the most famous one is situated in Hom Hung. Legend has it that this temple was the only building in the

area that remained intact and undamaged after an air raid during the Japanese occupation in WWII. Since then, people believe that the temple was exceptionally blessed by the Goddess of Mercy.

The 26th day of the first lunar month is called the “Treasury Opening Day” of the Goddess of Mercy. In recent years, many HK people have been attracted to the temple in Hung Hom on that day to borrow money from her treasure box. Indeed, it has become a ritual as gamblers and people with financial needs queue up every early.

[The Ritual of borrowing money from Kwun Yum’s Treasure Box](#)

The worshippers first have to donate some money for the incense of the temple. They will then be asked to pick up one red envelope on which an amount of money is written. Ranging from a hundred to more than 10 million dollars, the number represents the amount of money you can borrow from Goddess of Mercy, symbolizing how rich you can get in that year.

On top of that red packet, worshippers will also be given a red packet containing some peanuts, dried lily and lettuce, which signify longevity, having a happy family and generating more wealth respectively.





To save tree from further damage, the government has set up a small booth with books for worshippers to hang up their wishes.



5. The Birthday of Tam Kung

Tam Kung is a local deity who is very popular among fishermen and boat people in HK. He has been widely worshipped for his ability to forecast weather, thus bringing a sense of safety and blessing to the fishermen. According to Chan (2001), among the fishermen, “he only comes after the Queen of Heaven” in terms of importance.

With the decline of fishing villages in HK, there are only two temples

(one in Tokwawan and one in Shaukiwan) that can be found dedicated to Tam Kung nowadays. However, his importance never fades in the fishermen's hearts as on his every birthday, i.e., the 8th day of the fourth lunar month, one can see processions of worshippers marching along the streets with colourful celebration arches (Pai Lau) and lion dance.

As time goes by, the celebration of Tam Kung's birthday serves not only as a tribute to their god but in many local residents' minds, it is also a reminder of their origin and ancestry from the sea. Moreover, with the active participation of local residents in the parade and lion dance by the roadside, the occasion is a time for communal joy, gaiety and unity.



A devoted worshipper on her way to please the gods with roast pigs and other offerings.





Different altars of Tam Kung parading along streets.



The decorations on the altars show much sophistication and require craftsmanship

Photo Hunt- Can you tell how many paper dolls are decorated on the colorful altar?



The same figure of Tam Kung but worshipped in different looks in different communities



Devoted worshippers paying tribute to their gods.



The offering of gold pieces (in plastic boxes) and the words on the lantern express the fishermen's wishes - "Their sails will go smoothly as the wind blows."

Lion Dance – A mixture of Chinese martial art, folk dance and acrobats

Lion dance is a form of traditional dance in Chinese culture, in which performers mimic the lion's movements in a lion costume.

This traditional folk practice originated since ancient times, when peasants would practice martial arts as a means to entertain, keep fit for daily lives as well as fighting off thieves. The martial arts training gradually evolved and became lion dance. Aside from being a means of entertaining themselves and others, lion dance could also train people to be co-operative and united. Therefore, it was widely accepted by the common people.

The North Lion vs. the South Lion

Lion dance is basically divided into two types, i.e., the north lion and the south lion. Northern lions resemble a Pekinese Dog and usually have long and shaggy orange and yellow hair with either a red bow, or a green bow on its head to represent a male or female. Acrobatics are very common, with stunts like lifts or balancing on a giant ball.

South lions, on the other hand, look more like a lion. They are originally in three colours, i.e., black, red and yellow representing three brotherly characters in Chinese history. However, as time goes by, the lions now come in all different colours to make themselves look more eye-catching.

Whether it is the north lion or the south lion, the dance is traditionally accompanied by gongs, drums and firecrackers, representing the descent of good luck.

South lions believed to be able to drive away the evil spirits.





Lion dance and dragon dance both evolved from martial arts played by peasants.



d) Modern Art Forms

Haviland said “no known culture is without some form of art.” Art is regarded as the expression of the member of the culture towards human, cosmology, society and religion.

a) Hong Kong Art Centre

The Hong Kong Art Centre is the place where different art forms like drama, photography, sculpture, painting and calligraphy from both the local community and all over the world meet. Art programmes of all sorts can be found available at the centre.

No matter which form it takes, these art activities like exhibitions, plays, give people a chance to express and share their thoughts and feelings towards life with the public. The aesthetic sense can also be enhanced in

both the artists and visitors or audience.



The Healing Power of Art Therapy



“Le French May Film Festival” Exhibition



“Art in Hospital – Hospital Gallery

2. Cattle Depot Artists Village

This local Artist Village makes a name for itself for the unconventional art forms. The venue of this Artist Village was once a slaughterhouse, which was built in 1908. The slaughterhouse was originally located in

Hung Hom but was moved to its current site in To Kwa Wan because of the construction of Kowloon Canton Railway..

In 1999, the slaughterhouse was again moved to Sheung Shui because of hygiene consideration. The site was then re-developed in 2001 and becomes a home to local artists who live, work and exhibit there.

One of the most famous artists is Frog Kwok, often dubbed to be the most eccentric and unconventional Hong Kong artist.

Kwok is talented in transforming any space into an installation almost intuitively. However, his artwork covers a wide creative range, including painting, sculpture, environmental installations and video installations, to happenings and performances.

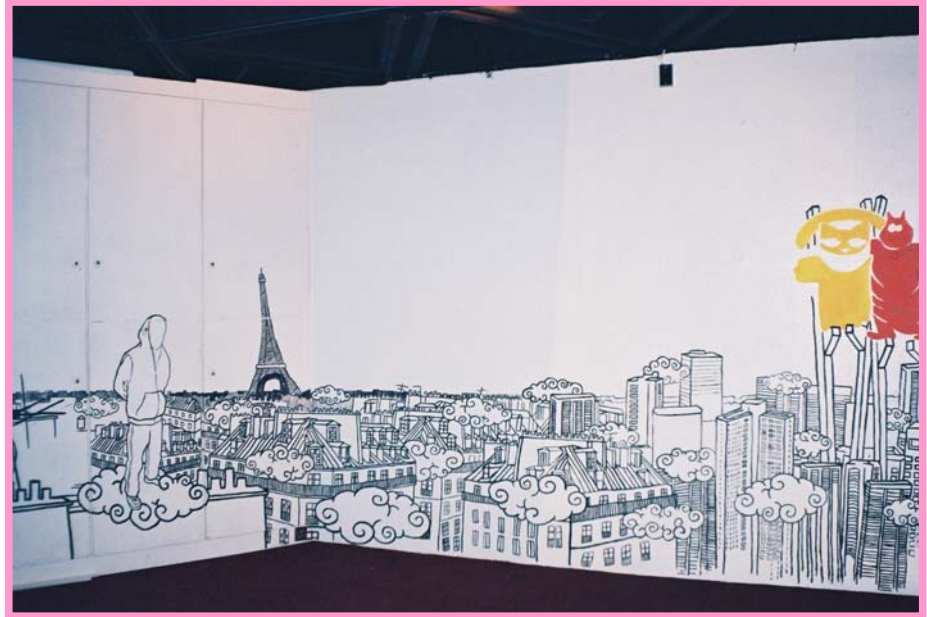
But when Kwok is labeled as contemporary arts fanatic, he has a strong foundation in traditional arts as Chinese ink ages and calligraphy are his specialties.

Maybe it is this artistic eloquence in both western and eastern art forms in Kwok that makes him resemble Hong Kong as a mixing pot of western and eastern cultures.





The HK Art Center and one of the exhibits.





An artistic village standing side by side with a modern and commercial residential building.

Weaknesses of Cultural tourism development in the Context of HK

Negative Consequences brought about by Tourism activities

a) Carrying capacity problems

Carrying capacity is defined as “the maximum number of people who can use a destination without unacceptable changes in the environment and without unacceptable changes in the enjoyment gained by visitors.” Carrying capacity problems occur when this maximum number is exceeded. There are three types of capacity problems, namely

- 1) Physical carrying capacity
- 2) Environmental carrying capacity and
- 3) Psychological carrying capacity.

Physical carrying capacity is more related to the amount of land suitable for the use of facilities like accommodation, water supply whereas environmental carrying capacity refers to the wear and tear of environment like physical erosion of historic monuments by visitors' feet. Psychological capacity is exceeded when the visitor's enjoyment is impaired

When we examine the Temple Parade on Cheung Chau, we found the event was so well received that some 40 thousand visitors turned up on the island compared with its own population being 30-40 thousands only. There were too many people flooding onto the island. Worse still, most of these visitors were gathering along the promenade along the island. The result was all the main streets were so crammed with people that neither the residents nor the local could move towards the place where the parade was held.

On the other hand, public facilities failed to support the huge needs of so many people. Despite the arrangement of additional mobile toilets on top of the public toilets at the site, long queues of visitors were seen standing under the scorching sun waiting for their turns.



(Above) Visitors had to queue for a long time under the scorching sun so as to proceed to the place where the parade was held.



(Below) Toilets managed by the government – there are not enough facilities to meet the needs.

All evidence of carrying capacity problems

The most annoying thing was when the parade was over, thousands of visitors who wished to return home had to wait for hours for the ferry. They gathered and queued up at the pier with an empty stomach. All these

were definitely something not very compatible with the slogan of hospitality chanted by the Tourism Board.

b) Pollution issues

In Chinese religions, different kinds of offerings are made to show respect to the deities. For instance, the worshippers will burn incense sticks, paper gods, splash rice, bean sprouts and wine onto the ground, etc.

The act itself is a waste of food as the food cannot be consumed again;

the burning of incense sticks pollutes the air. Besides, these offerings actually live a very short life as in order to entertain more worshippers, many of the incense sticks or offerings are taken away from the altar after a few seconds so as to make way for the offerings of more visitors and local people, meaning more income generated for the vendors. However, the disastrous side-effect is there is more rubbish created, which is in breach of the principle of sustainability.

Worse still, the disposal of the rubbish is in doubt as the quantity is so enormous that it can not be taken care of promptly. Eventually the cultural celebration is carried out at the expense of an increased burden on the rubbish landfill site.

The Wishing Tree in Tai Po is the most prominent example showing how heritage is severely victimized. As the wish-making process involves hundreds of visitors' throw the offering onto the tree. Day after day the tree could not afford the weight of the offerings and it almost died.

Plant experts have stepped in so as to save the tree but there is little hope of the tree's recovery. It is an ironic that blessings from the tree will turn into a curse to the tree itself.





Large amount of incense sticks left after the worship pollutes the land seriously.



Vegetarian food to be served during the festival on the island.

Even McDonald's respects the local customs and specially prepares vegetarian burgers for the visitors.



c) The Tarnishing of Cultural Integrity

While cultural assets could be spread across and make an impact on individual travelers through tourism activities, they are, at times, distorted so as to meet the needs of the tourists.

Take the Bun Festival as an example. According to Chinese traditions, all the local residents have to follow a 3-day vegetarian diet until the end of the festival. But seeing the flooding in of thousands of visitors as the best chance to make profit, many seafood restaurants broke the rule at midday or simply ignored this rule since the first day of the festival. The original spirit of respecting god by showing lenience to creatures is tarnished. It is evident that the culture has been commoditized while tourism has been developed at the cost of cultural breakdown.





Economic development at the expense of cultural integrity – both seafood vendors and visitors couldn't wait and disregard the tradition of following a vegetarian diet.

Opportunities of Cultural tourism development in the Context of HK

Concerted effort made by the whole community

a) Strong Support from Hong Kong Tourism Board

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) is a Government-subsidized body founded on 1 April 2001 in replacement of the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA). The two organizations are different in the sense that the latter has no affiliation to any specific sector or organisation within the industry and thus, is able to support the interests of Hong Kong's tourism in its entirety.

Since its establishment, we have witnessed how the organization endeavoured to market and promote Hong Kong as a destination worldwide.

In respect of the promotion of cultural tourism, there is a programme called “Cultural Kaleidoscope”, serving as a fascinating introduction to the different aspects of the local culture and heritage. Under this programme, interesting cultural activities like tai-chi classes, Chinese Tea Appreciation Classes, Cantonese Opera Class are included. Tourists also have a chance to take a ride on the last remaining sailing junk, which is a logo of old Hong Kong and meet English speaking experts who will share the old stories of HK with them.

A new Cultural Highlight – Culture and Festival Celebration

To further impress the visitors with our rich cultural assets, HKTB organized a mega event in May 2006 providing an unprecedented opportunity to share 18 days of Chinese festivals for the visitors.

Activities included display and mock rituals in celebration of birthdays of deities like Tin Hau, the Lord Buddha and Tam Kung, as well as the colourful Cheung Chau Bun Festival. Handicraft workshops like rainbow Calligraphy and food tasting of Chinese snacks were also organized.

Through participating in these activities, visitors can experience and get a better understanding of the different traditional culture of HK.



The Guided tour and static display help the visitors to gain a better understanding of the religious rituals



Foreign visitors are always amazed to know the story and meaning behind certain customs and rituals.



b) Lantau to be developed

into a Religious Hub

In recent years, there have been plans for the government to develop Lantau into a religious cultural hub. New religious attractions like the Wisdom Path is recently open and Ngong Ping 360, a new Buddhism-themed village is to be unveiled in June this year so as to add appeal to the two religious attractions already existing, i.e., .Precious Lotus Monastery and the Big Buddha. The four Buddhist attractions may appeal to tens of thousands of religious travellers

i) Precious Lotus (Po Lin) Monastery

Built in 1924 and known as the "Buddhist Kingdom in the South", precious Lotus Temple ranks first as the most magnificent structures amongst the four popular Buddhist temples in Hong Kong.

From the gate of the temple, you can see a three-story exhibition hall in which there is a big bell. The bell is delicately engraved with Buddhist figures and Buddhist scriptures. Controlled by a computer, the bell is rung once every seven minutes, 108 times a day-in essence to "relieve" 108 vexations.

The temple is also famous for its precious collection of “Sanskrit”, literally meaning “unbreakable”. Legend has it that after Buddha passed away, he set his physical body on fire. Over 84,000 pieces of colourful crystal-like relics were found after his cremation. China and Sri Lanka are the only two countries in the world to possess these holy relics. The two pieces at Po Lin Monastery were received from Sri Lanka. Each piece is only the size of a rice grain, and their colours change according to different people who view them.





Different views of the spectacular Po Lin Monastery.



It is so quiet in the temple. The Buddha statues look solemn but convey a sense of mercy. One may forget all his earthly troubles, fall into deep thoughts and meditate on the meaning of life easily.

In a word, the temple is a place that promises a peace of mind and spiritual enlightenment to the Buddhist disciples.

[ii\) The Giant Buddha](#)

Being one of the religious landmarks of Hong Kong, the Giant Buddha sits on a lotus throne on top of a three platform altar on Lantau Island and was unveiled for religious worship in 1993.

Believed to be the biggest outdoor and seated Buddha in the world, the

Statue is 26.4 meters high and weighs 202 tonnes. It was rumoured that it was originally made of concrete, but the devoted monks later changed their minds and changed the designs to bronze. Consequently, the Statue we see nowadays is made up of 202 bronze pieces and welded together.

On any sunny day, one can see hundreds of worshippers and tourists walking up the 268 steps to pay their respect to this Saviour in Asian religion.

At the same time, it is always interesting to know the Buddha's features carry different religious significance. For instance, his face with its broad forehead and elongated ears reaching almost to the shoulders signify the Buddha is in full possession of both virtue and wisdom. His green lotus eyes and eyebrows like a crescent moon are depicted in soft lines, signifying that the Buddha looks on all beings with eyes of compassion

[iii\) New Buddhist Delight : The Wisdom Path](#)

The Wisdom Path is one of the latest Buddhist tourist attractions in HK. It is made up of 38 wooden rectangular beams varying in height from 8-to-10 metres in the shape of a figure eight to represent infinity. Each wooden beam bears a portion of the prayer, which is written in traditional





Wisdom Path – allows us to learn the morals of Buddha in a serene and tranquil setting.



Chinese characters by a famous Chinese scholar, Professor Jao Tsung-I. Therefore, the Wisdom not only a religious attraction but also an artistic treasure.

Path is

After visiting the Po Lin Temple and the Giant Buddha, one can sustain his journey of enlightenment by visiting the Wisdom Path as the place promises a sense of tranquility. While trying to understand the words of Buddha, one can grow in wisdom and learn to appreciate the beauty of Chinese calligraphy at the same time.

[iv\) New Buddhist Delight : Ngong Ping 360](#)

Ngong Ping Village is an amazing cultural themed village architecturally designed and landscaped to reflect the cultural and spiritual integrity of the Ngong Ping area. Expected to be unveiled in June 2006, it boasts several major attractions - Walking with Buddha, Monkey's Tale Theatre and the Ngong Ping Tea House .-

Walking with Buddha

Walking with Buddha is an immersive, multimedia attraction allowing guests to follow the life of Buddha and his path to enlightenment.

This attraction physically takes the visitors on an immersive journey through Siddhartha's life. From the opulence of Siddhartha's Palace to the harshness of the Forest, they will witness his transition from being a Prince at Court to reaching supreme awareness and becoming Buddha.

In a word, the visitors will discover the origins of Buddhism and track its expansion across the world. They will also be enlightened by the essence of Buddha's teachings through a variety of themed scenes and activities.

Monkey's Tale Theatre

Monkey's Tale Theatre, on the other hand, is a highly interactive in nature. Set in a magical courtyard under the branches of a majestic Bodhi Tree, this story entertain and inspire guests of all ages while they go through the virtual journey of greed, gluttony and friendship and learn the moral lessons from Monkey King..

Ngong Ping Tea House

Meanwhile, at the Ngong Ping Tea House, you can enjoy traditional Chinese tea ceremonies and sample a selection of fine teas and cakes. Or

one can simply relax himself in the tranquil surrounding in the beautifully landscaped gardens.

At times, there will be an array of street theatre and performances like kung-fu demonstrations, jugglers and Chinese opera shows on top of the religious programmes.

The Question of “Staged authenticity”

Some people may cast doubt on the attractiveness of this Buddhist-themed village as they compare it with the traditional temples and Buddhist establishments. They see the former as something staged and fake whereas the latter something authentic.

However, Dr Mckecher eases our worry as he suggests

“Many tourists want “authenticity” but not necessarily “reality”.

It is because when tourists travel, most of them have minimal knowledge about the cultural heritage. And they travel to the heritage to “reaffirm”, “reinforce” or “challenge” their stereotyped images of the destination. Therefore, reality is not their utmost concern, as long as what they see is authentic.

Moreover, mainly targeting at the local residents, traditional temples seldom have interpretative devices explaining the history and meanings of all these rituals. But some of these cultural assets are sometimes too complicated for the visitors to fully appreciate on his own.

The theme village can compensate this inadequacy. As Mckercher (2002) suggests in his “Attributes of Popular Cultural Attractions in Hong Kong” (2002), a successful cultural attraction

“must effectively tell a story, make the asset come alive, make the experience participatory, make it relevant to the tourist, focus on quality and provide a sense of authenticity.”

Equipped with interpretative devices like tri-lingual tour guides, static

and interactive display, guided tours, audio-visual aids like the Money King Theatre, visitors from all round the world can get the message across and understand the significance of the rituals and traditions.

c) An increasing Public concern for Heritage Conservation

In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of heritage conservation among the general public in Hong Kong.

Take the Central Police Station Compound as an example. Since it was announced that the whole site would be put into tenders by the government for redeveloping into a tourist attraction, a voluntary Central Police Station Heritage Taskforce, which comprises Central & Western District Council, the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, and the Conservancy Association was set up to urge the government to re-visit the assessment method.

Participatory activities were organized to collect more public comments. For instance, the “Central Police Station Compound Idea Competition” was organized so as to solicit comments and ideas for the government’s consideration before the shaping and position of the Compound.

A round table forum was also held on four discussion themes namely heritage conservation, public engagement, tender process and institutional mechanism. By encouraging more active participation from the general public, it can be foreseen that a more objective view can be achieved in the planning and decision making of cultural tourism development in the future.



Public discussion under way on conservation of Central Police Station at Round Table Forum held on 25th September 2005



Threats of Cultural Tourism development in the context of HK

Hindrance brought about by unfavourable social conditions

1. Inconsistent conservation policy for the old historic buildings

While the government has reiterated its commitment to the conservation of local heritage, its policies are somewhat discrepant to its claim. For instance, the Wanchai Market, as the only Bauhaus-styled building in HK, was sold to a private property developer for re-development. This act signifies that the Market is to be demolished and this has aroused spate of controversies and opposition. The whole case is still under negotiation and the fate of the Monument is yet to be known yet.

However, just before the announcement of its fate, all the shops at “Wedding card Street”, another old street in the same district had been ordered to be re-developed and all the shops have moved out so as to make way for re-development.

With the demolition of all these testimony to people’s collective memory, it remains a doubt what heritage assets we have left for cultural tourism to capitalize upon.

2. Overdependence on mainlander as source of tourist arrivals

According to Murphy, “curiosity” is a travel motivator that drives people to travel.

Since 1997, China has gradually replaced North America, Australia and Taiwan and become the main source of tourist arrivals to HK. However, as the mainlanders share the same origin with us, our cultural heritage like religious rituals and customs might be similar in certain ways and thus do not seem particularly exotic and distinctive to them.

For example, burning incense sticks may be something they do every day to pay respect to their ancestors every day. The art form of paper cutting, knitting of grasshopper and Chinese calligraphy are something they are most familiar with. Cantonese opera and paper gods which seem exotic in westerners’ eyes are not interesting to them either.

Indeed, in spite of the launching of “Traditional Festival Celebration” by HK Tourism Board during the period which, in our observation, is quite popular among the westerners, the no. of tourist arrivals by mainlanders in the “1st May Holiday” this year has dropped by 14% as compared with the figure last year. There may be different reasons behind the declining figure. But the figure shows the cultural highlight might not have been very successful in arousing our mainland counterparts’ interest to come to HK.

3. Lack of Inheritors of Traditional Rituals and Art Forms

Many of the traditional craftsmanship and rituals are running out of

inheritors. Like the making of Chinese lanterns and paper effigies, the cheap labour cost in mainland China makes it an unpromising job for most HK people and the new generations are not interested to take up these traditional skills.

Take the Bun Festival as an example. After the festival, it was reported in the newspaper that many parents would not let their children join the parade next year because the weather was too hot. Under the one child policy of many families in HK, the parents are unwilling to see their children parading under the scorching sun. Without inheritors to hand down these rituals, it is possible that these rituals may soon die out like the Maidens' Festival in HK.



One of the few rainbow calligraphers we can find in HK now.

Suggestions and Conclusion

In consideration of the strategic analysis of the four different elements on the above, we have come up with the following suggestions for the betterment of the development of cultural tourism in HK:-

1. Further Research and Development on Identifying Unique Cultural Features of HK

With the launching of several projects like Ngong Ping 360 and Culture and Heritage Celebration mentioned above, it is apparent that the authorities have made the right moves on fostering the development of cultural tourism in HK. However, with a view to further capitalizing upon the cultural assets, we need to broaden their appeal by exploring new

cultural elements on top of the existing attractions.

For instance, in Czech, we can find thousands of visitors flooding into theatres for famous operas like “Don Giovanni”; Moscow circus is also well known among foreign tourists. What cultural performance can HK proudly present and promote to the visitors? When visitors to Russia are amazed by the sophisticated craftsmanship shown by the layer-in-layer wooden nestling dolls and Switzerland takes pride in its cuckoo clocks and cow bells as souvenirs, what cultural items can be signature enough to represent HK? As yet, there seems to be much room for further investigation by the authorities in these respects.

2. Collaboration Among Various Departments

In consideration of the different forms of carrying capacity problems arising like the adequacy of facilities, there needs to be more careful planning and better co-ordination among different government departments, organizing committees and parties concerned. Past cases should be thoroughly studied and evaluated together so as to forecast the maximum number of tourists that a tourism spot can accommodate and facilitate better arrangements of logistics support like crowd control, transportation and amenities, etc.,.

3. The Set up of a New Taskforce

The inconsistent conservation policy in Hong Kong has aroused several disputes over a few heritage sites between property developers and local communities.

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In view of this, an official taskforce involving the partnership of different stakeholders like governmental departments, related experts, community representatives and even the property developers should be set up. Regular meetings and brainstorming sessions could be put on the agendas so that open discussion could be facilitated and consequently, a more balanced view could be reached and more sensible policies could be formulated before the heritage assets are irreversibly turned into shopping malls or residential towers.

For instance, the taskforce can financial grants and loans offered to owners so as to upkeep their historical buildings. They can also provide assistance to relocate tenants.

All these pave way for more conservation possibilities.

4. Diversification of Markets

According to the Annual Report of Tourism Commission 2004-2005, arrivals from mainland grew by 44.6%, taking the annual to 12.25 million and accounting for a significant 34.8% of the annual total of tourist arrivals. The figures undoubtedly reflect how heavily we depend on mainland as the major source of visitors, while highlighting the potential threat of over-dependency

However, while we look at the statistical figures released by Hong Kong Tourism Board, we can notice an encouraging growth in the number of visitors from other countries like Taiwan, other parts in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Not sharing the same cultural origin with us, they would be more likely to enjoy the brand new cultural experiences and thus promise a great potential clientele for cultural tourism to flourish.

Total Number of Visitors (Jul) : 2,185,610

Major Market Areas	Jul 2005	Jul 2006	Growth (%)
All Countries	2,067,240	2,185,610	+6
The Americas	134,948	140,842	+4
Europe, Africa & the Middle East	134,423	144,481	+8
Australia, N.Z. & S. Pacific	56,002	56,273	+1
North Asia	150,012	161,508	+8
South & Southeast Asia	196,583	212,257	+8
Taiwan	203,425	221,001	+9
Mainland China	1,147,076	1,196,987	+4



And when we look at the list of overseas offices of HKTB, we can only find offices in five cities in charge of different regions in Europe, i.e., London in charge of Europe, Africa and the Middle East; Paris in charge of France and French speaking Europe; Frankfurt in charge of Central Europe; Barcelona in charge of Spain and Portugal; and Turin in charge of Southern Europe. But what about the other regions like Northern Europe? In recent years, Finland has been voted as the most competitive country for consecutive years and the Finnish Tourism Board has made an effort to promote its cultural attractions like Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, and traditional Sauna in the old capital of Turku in the context of HK. Can we do the same by promoting Cantonese opera or something similar in the exploration of new markets?

The above considerations highlights the need of further research on identifying new sources of tourist arrivals and target segment like the retired senior citizens for better marketing initiatives.

5. Promotion of Heritage Education

In the long run, public education is a must for a holistic and sustainable planning of cultural tourism development.. The government could step up its effort in promoting heritage education like including it in the Liberal Studies and Integrated Humanities curriculum. Being motivated to explore conservation possibilities, the students would learn to appreciate the embedded cultural values, recognize the importance of heritage assets, thus learn to protect the territory's unique past..

Similar messages could be sent across to the general public through the mass media by the Civic Education Committee. Citizens would learn to respect their own cultural assets and vandalism like writing graffiti could be avoided.

In a nutshell, as echoed by Mr Wahid, ex-President of Indonesia in the International Symposium on Cultural Heritage Conservation in Bali,

“Cultural products should not be confined in a historical setting but should be opened to welcome new ideas, innovative applications and improvisations”

His words shed lights on the need for the HK Tourism Board and the whole community to continue the effort in exploring new cultural attractions and face the challenges ahead for future development of cultural tourism in Hong Kong.

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