THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF LARGE-SCALE HOTEL CLUSTERS AND THEIRS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN URBAN FACILITIES AND TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the formation process of large-scale hotel clusters and their transition of the relationship between urban facilities and tourist attractions, focusing on Chiang Mai City.

In ancient times, Chiang Mai city was the capital of the Lanna Kingdom. Later, during the modernization period, it was included as a province in the northern region of Thailand. In 1921, the first hotel of Chiang Mai was built along with urban and tourism facilities development in accordance with leisure tourism trends of western countries. After that hotel played an important role in urban development and the creation of entertainment or leisure facilities. According to continuous urban growth and expansion for over 700 years, 40 ancient temples inside the city walls and hundreds more temples outside remained. However, it caused the announcements of a land-use masterplan to control new construction of large-scale and highrise buildings. It also directly affected large-scale hotels in the city, resulting in the end of new cluster development after it had been developed for almost 80 years.

Nevertheless, tourism and accommodation businesses were continually developed, packing into the city in the form of small-scale accommodation. At the present, there are 17,800 rooms of small-scale accommodations which is double in comparison to the number of large-scale hotel rooms. Those small accommodations were built among local residences that made the increasing urban density and transition of relationship among accommodations, urban facilities, and tourist attractions. So small accommodations and local residences had shared the urban facilities together. In addition, entertainment facilities were considered as tourist attractions for local general tourists.

Keywords: hotel, urban development, urban, tourist attraction, Chiang Mai, Thailand

1 INTRODUCTION

In 1296, Chiang Mai was established as a capital city of the Lanna Kingdom. The city plan was designed by using the cosmological concept of Hinduism-Buddhism. In 1932, the Chiang Mai monarchy era ended, then it was replaced by the governor system and included as a province of central Siam state, namely Thailand in the meantime. During the 1960s, the Tourism Authority of Thailand promoted Chiang Mai as the second international tourist city after Bangkok. As a result, foreigners recognized Chiang Mai as a tourist destination then Superhighway road heading to the city was constructed. After that, Chiang Mai urban was gradually developed to support tourism businesses. In the 2000s, the city was fully developed, especially large-scale hotels. Those developments were controlled by land-use masterplan since 1999 therefore major accommodation development changed to small-scale instead.
2 METHODOLOGY

This study applies a mapping analysis method for time period, showing the location of each large-scale accommodation that contained over 100 rooms and significant hotels during 1921-2021. Those maps also showed the location of accommodations along with major entertainment facilities which were considered as urban tourist attractions during those periods. The cluster development processes were explained by dividing into 3 periods according to 3 revisions of the Chiang Mai Land Use Masterplan. The relationships among hotel clusters, urban facilities, and tourist attractions, as well as their influencing factors are described by using data collected from literature reviews and official license records.

3 HOTEL CLUSTER FORMATION PROCESS AND ITS RELATION TO TOURIST ATTRACTION AND URBAN FACILITY

The hotel cluster formation process and its relations were explained by dividing into 3 periods according to 3 significant revisions of the Chiang Mai Land Use Masterplan, including publications of 1989, 1999 - 2012, and the updated situation in 2021.

In 1984, there was the first masterplan publication of Chiang Mai land use. In 1989, its first revision was published then in 1999, the second revision was published accordingly. After that the second revision was extended until 2005 - 2006. Later in 2008, the third revision was published then in 2012, the fourth revision was published. Although that revised law included large-scale building control, it only covered the conserved areas, consisting of old towns and an old community in the west of Ping River. However, in 2016 and 2017, there were 2 publications of the year 2012’s revised version which covered new areas of large-scale building control on areas, including areas between the city and Suthep Mountain, namely Nimmanhaemin and Huey Keaw areas. After 2017, the high building exceeding 12 meters with over 1,000 square-meter floor area was not allowed to construct in such areas. As mentioned above, it was directly affecting large hotel businesses in the City causing the end of large hotel construction.

3.1 During the beginning of modern hotel industry in Chiang Mai (1921-1989)

Before 1960, hotels were established mainly to cater the travellers of non-governmental organizations’ business trips, notably salesmen, lorry drivers, etc. During that time, government officials, diplomats, businessmen, and their families normally accommodated the guests at their own residences. There was little tourism existing in Chiang Mai. They travelled to the city mostly related to official duties, business purposes, or visiting relatives or friends.
In the early of that period, a train was the main type of transportation among provinces and regions. For traveling in the city, people usually travel by car and bicycle. Therefore the first hotel in Chiang Mai was built in front of Chiang Mai railway station and operated by the State Railway of Thailand, namely the Railway Terminus Hotel. That hotel's first building was 1 story with a wooden structure. After that in 1964, it was replacing built with a 6-floor modern concrete building.

After 1960, tour buses became the main type of transportation nationwide, and travel by local taxi in the city instead. Although in 1969, Chiang Mai airport was promoted to an international airport, the air ticket was still expensive. Therefore air transportation was not popular since it was mostly limited among elites and government officers both domestic and international flights.

In addition, during the 1960s hotels were also built in the original Chiang Mai commercial areas, including Thapae and Chang Moi areas where theaters, markets, and shops were located. Those businesses were mostly operated by Thai-Chinese people who traded with central Bangkok people by boats since the Ping river trading transportation era. In the mid-1970s-1980s, there was a new cluster at the end of Superhighway road. The cluster consisted of high-class hotels, including essential and leisure facilities such as meeting room, restaurants, game rooms, and pools. Those hotel facilities were not related to local commercial facilities. Therefore, the cluster developed far further than Chiang Mai urban expansion.

The most popular tourist attraction was Chiang Mai Old Cultural Center which opened in 1973, it was located on Wualai road, in the south which was an old silversmith village. As a result, a number of bus companies started using the area around Changklan road. Where it offered easy connections to Wualai road. It became an accessible bus hub for both locals and tourists.

In conclusion, during that period, hotels were built around main transportation areas such as train station, and a main road to the city center. Also, in the late 1970s, a tour bus hub which was located in Changklan Cluster was formed because Changklan road was newly developed into a modern 2-lane road. That was the advantage of vacant land reformation which was hardly found in the existing residential area such as inside the city wall and earthen wall.

3.2 During the early period of international tourism (1990 - 1999) and after the vacuum of land use masterplan (2000 - 2012)

During the 1990s, the most popular tourist attraction was Central Kad Suan Kaew mall which was first operated in 1992, making it the biggest shopping and entertainment center in Thailand at that time. In addition, a travel route of Chiang Mai Zoo, Doi Suthep temple, Phuping Palace, and Doi Pui, a Hmong village, starting from Huey Kaew road, it became popular for both small and big groups of tourists who travel by tour bus, van, local taxi, and private car. The bar and restaurant were built in many places among hotel surroundings and along channel road. In 1995, SEA Games was organized so that many facilities e.g.
service apartments were built at the site. However, the bar and restaurant were not included as site’s facilities.

During those periods, most hotels were located in the Chang Klan cluster which caused an increase of the cluster's density. In addition, there were 3 new clusters and new commercial area. The first new cluster was included in the southern Changklan road area where a Ping river crossing bridge was located. The second cluster was located in the western old town, around the corner of Huay Kaew road. That was a low-density residence, the latest area connecting to the old city which had a few commercial developments. As a result, large-scale buildings such as Kaf Suan Keaw mall and hotels were able to develop in such Huay Kaew road area. The third cluster was located in Thapae Gate area along the eastern old city wall. That area increased in popularity because Chiang Mai Sunday Walking Street which was first started in 2002 on Thapae road. After that, that Walking Street was moved to the Thapae Gate and the old town area.

Moreover, 3 hotels were built at the end of highway road area which intersected with the previous Huaykaew cluster. Also, during 2000 - 2012, there were an increasing number of newly built hotels on the end of highway road area then they expanded into Nimmanhaemin area.

In conclusion, during those periods, major urban tourist attractions were Shopping centers. Although there were modern shopping centers which were built in Chiang Mai since 1957, the most impactful one was Central Kad Suan Kaew, causing development of the new commercial area on Huay Kaew road and bringing all tourist's attention. As a result, previous shopping centers were closed and demolished. Moreover, the new development of low-cost airlines caused an increased number of tourists, especially domestic tourists. It resulted in decreasing popularity of domestic tour bus and train transportations. It was an important factor of development for the next period.

3.3 The updated situation (2012 - 2021)

During 2012 - 2021, there were only 5 newly operating hotels. However, there were an amount of large-scale buildings which were built on specifically controlled areas. Those buildings were allowed to be constructed according to construction licenses which were issued before 2012. After finishing such constructions, the building owners had changed a building license from residential complex to small-scale hotels.

During that period, the new commercial and hotel area was included in the Nimmanhaemin area, located between universities and the City center. In 2005, there were 56 bars & restaurants then in 2009, it was increased to 67 of them. That area was popular among Thai tourists. However, bars & restaurants for foreign tourists, westerners in particular, were located in the east of the Ping River and the City wall.

Those small accommodations were built among local residences that made the increasing urban density and transition of relationship among accommodations, urban facilities, and tourist attractions. So small accommodations and local residences had shared the urban facilities together.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, at the beginning of the relationship among hotel clusters, urban facilities, and tourist attractions, the hotel clusters were formed along the newly developed roads which were located in non-touristic areas. However, during cluster formation, it also attracted more entertainment facilities to settle in the clusters.

During the middle period, the hotel cluster was forced to develop on the rest of land in west part of the city. As well as other large-scale entertainment facilities which were developed in the same part. In the 2000s, the lastest commercial and hotel area was developed in the Nimmanhaemin area along with new bars and restaurants. That area contained huge potential for tourism development, especially in terms of location since it was located on the main road, namely Nimmanhemin road which linked between Airport and highway road. Also, it was closed to universities and previous hotel clusters, consisting of Rincome and Lotus Pang Suan Kaew Clusters. However, in the late 2010s, according to the mentioned building control law of Masterplan, there was the ending period of large-scale hotel cluster’s new development. However, new accommodation businesses were still developed, especially for small-scale accommodations such as boutique hotels, guest houses, and hostels.

In 2021, according to the number of accommodation licenses being issued, there were 540 small accommodations in total which contained over 17,800 rooms. Also, there were 43 large accommodations in total which contained over 9,500 rooms. Those small accommodations contained nearly double of total
number of large-scale hotel rooms in Chiang Mai City, they could be built easily in a small piece of land and renovated from the existing building, particularly in the conserved areas.

![Fig.5 Charts of the total number of hotels and rooms compare between large and small-scale in each sub-district area (see the sub-district locations on Fig. 1)](image)

5 SUGGESTION AND LIMITATION

This paper was obtained by collecting data from official records which were specific or some controlled businesses e.g. hotel accommodations and entertainment facilities. In this case, it focused on nightclubs, bars and restaurants as well as shopping centers. However, there were other small urban tourist attractions such as cafes, coffee shops, and Thai massage services. So, it was difficult to identify both location and operating period because such businesses require no license.

REFERENCE LIST


