

## Heritage Accommodation in Bangkok: Development and Importance of Culture<sup>\*</sup>

ที่พักที่เป็นมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมในกรุงเทพฯ: วิวัฒนาการและความสำคัญของวัฒนธรรม

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### Abstract

The idea of converting historic buildings into tourist accommodations has emerged as an interesting trend in Bangkok over the past decade. This article provides the idea on development of heritage accommodation in Bangkok. It also includes an analysis of how culture is considered as an important element for this particular type of accommodation. The research has illustrated a number of findings related on culture and how it should be interpreted at heritage accommodation. It became evident that tourists perceive heritage accommodation differently from typical heritage. It shows that culture is the most important aspect for heritage accommodation and tourists who stay at heritage accommodation have high intention to learn about the host culture through having cultural experience and thus culture should be integrated into interpretative program for tourists. It is suggested to acknowledge heritage accommodation as a learning institution of culture of the host country and not only a tourist accommodation that provides overnight stay for foreigners. These new theoretical views on heritage accommodation will be useful for developing approaches on management, conservation and interpretation of culture at heritage accommodation.

**Keywords:** Heritage, Hotel, Accommodation, Tourism, Interpretation, Culture, Bangkok

### Introduction

Over the past decades, heritage field has witnessed a continuous growth of heritage accommodation particularly those that converting historic buildings into tourist accommodation. The development has stimulated several questions regarding on this type of heritage. This research is a study of heritage accommodations in Bangkok and its

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<sup>\*</sup> This article is part of Ph.D. dissertation – Interpretation of Culture at Heritage Accommodations in Bangkok

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development. Several aspects that distinguish heritage accommodation from other type of heritage or other tourist accommodations are illustrated. The in-depth study on heritage accommodation in Bangkok has pointed out that culture is the most important element for heritage accommodation and the most interested issue for visitors who stay at this type of accommodation.

The study focuses on heritage accommodation categorised as Converted Heritage Accommodation and Created Heritage Accommodation. It has been done through in-dept interview, direct observation and questionnaire-based survey. The in-depth interview and direct observation were conducted with 12 selected heritage accommodations located in Bangkok while the questionnaire-based survey was carried out from 300 respondents, who are visitors staying at heritage accommodations in Bangkok in order to gather their opinions, perceptions, expectations, potential responses and decisions. At the end, new findings were discovered to form new knowledge on the view of heritage accommodation.

Findings from this research provide theoretical views and approaches on how to appropriately manage, conserve and interpret this type of heritage. It also shows how to create culture experience for visitors and how heritage accommodation should play role in promoting value and characteristic of Thai culture.

### **Development of Heritage Accommodation in Bangkok**

Nowadays, the hotel is not just the place that provides basic needs of lodging and foods. As Curtis (2003, p.6) has suggested, modern tourists seek style, service, comfort, luxury, creativity, personal service, authenticity, intrigue, and more from a hotel. In order to satisfy the increasing needs of tourists, accommodation services developed in a more diverse way. They aim to offer variety of services such as spa, shops, conference facilities or casino - some of these elements became normal in today's hotel functions. Hotels also developed toward numerous themes, and in some cases they went beyond ordinary for example the capsule hotels, ice hotel, cave hotel or underwater hotel. The more variety of tourists' needs as well as their expectations led to high competitiveness in the hotel industry and greater challenge in hotel development than ever before. While many hotels are in search of unique and bizarre themes for their concepts, a small group of hotel owners decided to use the theme 'heritage'. Heritage is undoubtedly an attractive type of tourist destination. All heritages are of cultural significance in which

people value and are interested in, want to learn from and witness them. Many cultural heritage sites around the world have been populated for tourists' visit. Dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many old houses, castles and mansions in Europe were converted into small lodgings. This type of accommodation provides personalized accommodation, services and facilities as they are considerably smaller than mainstream hotels. It was considered as an initial idea of using historic buildings for lodging service.

In the case of Bangkok, there are two notable movements for heritage accommodation. The first movement was when hotel began its development in Bangkok and set up first historic hotel from the past. This is particularly associated with Original Heritage Accommodation. Dating back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century or during the King Mongkut era, hotel in Bangkok began its development at the same time of tourism development in the world. Siam developed its diplomatic relationships with Westerners and Chinese and the number of foreigners entering the country began to grow as well as the need for tourist accommodation. In 1857, King Mongkut sent Siamese embassy to London for an audience with Queen Victoria (Deangroj 2001, p.92). It was described through famous Thai Literature, *Nirat London - the Voyage to London* composed by Mom Racho Thai – and believed as an influential inspiration of Thai hotel establishment. Hotel in Bangkok began its development but most of the hotels built around that time or few decades later were unable to survive except the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, built in 1876 (The Most famous Hotel in the World n.d., website). It is an oldest heritage accommodation in Bangkok that still exists.

The second movement is the emergence of new form of heritage accommodation that establishing from historic buildings. This recent establishment occurred in Bangkok over the past decade and it features the idea of using an old building to provide tourist accommodation. The trend for establishing this kind of heritage accommodations began significantly since 2004 with strong influence from three factors. The first factor was the emergence of boutique hotels from the 1980s that encouraged heritage owners to open small hotel. Sigala and Leslie (2005, pp.28-19) stated that tourists around the beginning of 1980s began to search for distinctness in hospitality products and services rather than the typical chain hotels. The new type of hotel known as 'boutique', 'design' or 'lifestyle' hotel has emerged to serve this group of tourists. It is described as a small hotel, non-chain-operated and with its own unique or sophisticated characteristics. It has become the new choice of hospitality product for

tourists that differentiate themselves from others. Heritage accommodation shares the same characteristic in terms of size and management with boutique hotel but it features heritage character.

The second factor was the growth of cultural tourism with high interesting on heritage. As defined by Richards (1996, p.23), 'cultural tourism' is *"the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs"*. Tourism has developed from a pursuit of basic leisure need to the more consumption of all forms of culture. When people are away from their usual environment, they have certain chances to experience different cultures from other nations. Number of tourists seeks to experience these differences which often found in culture, art, traditions, customs, beliefs or architectural styles in other countries and traveling has become part of discovering process for cultural distinctiveness. Chadwick's suggestion (in Mason 2003, p.9) that tourists travel with various motivations and one important reason is to gain pleasure through culture. This motivational factor became significant in tourism development and led to the beginning of cultural tourism. Traveling to cultural heritage places is another way to acquire cultural experience through places, objects and activities which are combined to represent the stories of people and place from the past. The increasing interest in art, culture and history as a result of demographic, social and cultural differences has resulted in high number of tourists demand for cultural attractions in various forms including an accommodation. Sigala and Leslie (2005, pp.32-33) explained that these tourists demand to experience, discover and expand their knowledge in art and history during their traveling trips. This is why they prefer small-scale historic accommodation with a high cultural values, unique experience, personal service and local intimate and as a result, heritage accommodation has been significantly welcomed from these post-modern tourists. Heritage accommodation where they can live within heritage place and have an authentic cultural experience seems to be the answer and it has been developed as part of cultural tourism in Thailand. It is obvious that this trend was the result of the grown of cultural tourism under the strong influence from the change of tourists' demand and their increased interest in art, culture and history. Heritage accommodation is considered as a cultural product with the combination of cultural values of historic building, beauty design, cultural related experience, the standard services and facilities of hotel.

The third factor was an increased awareness in conserving historic building in Thailand and the movement of conservation practice that accepted ‘adaptive re-used’ method as a way to conserve historic buildings. Australia ICOMOS (2000, p.2) defined adaptation of historic building as “*modifying a place to suit the existing use*”. The concept of adaptation or adaptive reuse is to extend the life of historic buildings and to prevent them from becoming forsaken and derelict. It preserves buildings by changing outdated functions into new use in order to meet new potential demand. However, such a change should not diminish heritage values and its aesthetic value which should still be appreciated through its appearance. In general, adaptation and reuse seek to safeguard the structures, form, external appearance, and materials of historic building. This approach encourages protection of fabric of historic buildings as well as its significance inherent within the place, and accepts suitable change in function. Under this concept, protection of heritage buildings by converting them into hotels and providing accommodation service is considered a sound action because the sense of place and values are still intact. This approach allows the function of historic buildings to change for better use which is more appropriate in the present time. Using this method, heritage owners can create a business opportunity by changing its original function into a tourist accommodation. It is a way to preserve heritage and reduce the chance to have many old buildings abandoned or deteriorated over time. Heritage owners believe in the uniqueness of their heritages and aim to use cultural value to attract tourists. Converting a historic building into a tourist accommodation has become a legitimate form of heritage conservation in Thailand. All these 3 factors have influenced the development of heritage accommodation in Bangkok in which this development is expected to continue in the following years.

### **Meaning and Types of Heritage Accommodation**

The study on development of heritage in Bangkok helped developing a theoretical perspective on the meaning of this type of heritage and how it can be divided. The meaning of heritage accommodation can be re-defined as “*A historic building or traditional architecture that includes cultural significance and is being used as a place to primarily provide lodging services to tourists*”. It can be categorized into Original Heritage Accommodation, Converted Heritage Accommodation, Created Heritage

Accommodation and Manufactured Heritage Accommodation using three criteria namely the evolution of the place to become an accommodation, the age, and the existence of cultural significance.

### **1. Original Heritage Accommodation**

Original Heritage Accommodation refers to historic accommodation which was initially built to provide accommodation service and has been operated as heritage accommodation for longer than 50 years. It is considered as heritage as it well represents historical value of the place and testimony of their era. It has to consist of cultural significance with other heritage values. The term can be found similar to the meaning of heritage hotel which has been used to describe an old hotel with high historical value. Throughout its long operation, Original Heritage Accommodations could have gained their renown through traditions, cultures and identities of its nation or association with special events which create their social and spiritual values. Some examples of Original Heritage Accommodation are the Savoy Hotel in London, the Relexa Schlosshotel Cecilienhof in Germany, the Algonquin Hotel in New York or the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Bangkok.

### **2. Converted Heritage Accommodation**

Converted Heritage Accommodation shares similar characteristic as ‘historic hotel’ - the term that is commonly used in Europe and America to describe historic properties that were converted from their original functions to hotels. Converted Heritage Accommodations refers to any historic building with over 50 years old and consists of high cultural significance. It is considered as heritage places due to long history, integrity and ambiance that can be evidence on its architecture. The historical and artistic values of the places are two most essential aspects. Converted Heritage Accommodation can be converted from castles, mansions, shophouses, cottages, houses or fortresses into tourist accommodation using adaptive reuse approach for heritage conservation. Some examples of Converted Heritage Accommodation are the Ritz Hotel in Paris, Siolim House in India or Hotel 1926 in Pulau Penang.

### 3. Created Heritage Accommodation

Created Heritage Accommodation refers to an accommodation that is re-created from the original model of heritage or an accommodation that is newly designed, converted or created using heritage or cultural theme to represent the historical character or aesthetic quality of architecture. Although the age of Created Heritage Accommodation is less than 50 years old, it already has values in other aspects particularly aesthetic value or shows high potential to gain cultural significance in the future. For example if it is built as a landmark, designed by national architect or artist, represents the architectural design of specific period, shows high aesthetic quality of architecture, has strong relationships with social community or has strong association to the Thai monarchy. It can also has high potential to be considered as heritage in the future due to its existing characteristic and fabric, which shows uniqueness, traditional style or cultural characters that are important to the nation. It can thus represent aesthetic, cultural and social values of the local culture in the same way as other historic buildings. Mandarin Oriental Hotel Dhara Dhevi in Chiang Mai is an example of Created Heritage Accommodation in Thailand.

### 4. Manufactured Heritage Accommodation

Manufactured Heritage Accommodation has same characteristics with Created Heritage Accommodation. It also aims to be built using the heritage theme or attempts to be 'heritage' and it is the newly created building or newly renovated building to become tourist accommodation. Thus, there is no historical significance and when considering other elements, it lack of or has low potential to gain cultural significance and values in the future. Manufactured Heritage Accommodation is not actually heritage but could look alike heritage. Manufactured Heritage Accommodation seeks to gain cultural significance, but seem to have low potential to succeed as Created Heritage Accommodation. It only focuses on the fabric or architectural appearance of the building through the use of traditional design, Thai style decoration, and old or local furniture. However, these elements are just superficially attached to the place, and not truly integrated into its spirit. This type of accommodation also lack of social value in which hotel guests can interact and experience the local culture of the society. Thus, cultural significance has never existed and it can be considered as 'fake heritage'. Plearnwan in Hua Hin is an example of Manufactured Heritage Accommodation in Thailand.

Following the previous notion of heritage concept, cultural significance is used as a key aspect to define heritage accommodation. To divide heritage accommodation into four categories provides a more distinctive view on characteristic and meaning of heritage accommodation. It also creates better understanding on heritage accommodation and help developing effective strategic plan for management, conservation and interpretation of each type. It should be noted that using the term heritage for Created Heritage Accommodation and Manufactured Heritage Accommodation does not indicate these two types as cultural heritage yet.

### **New Findings**

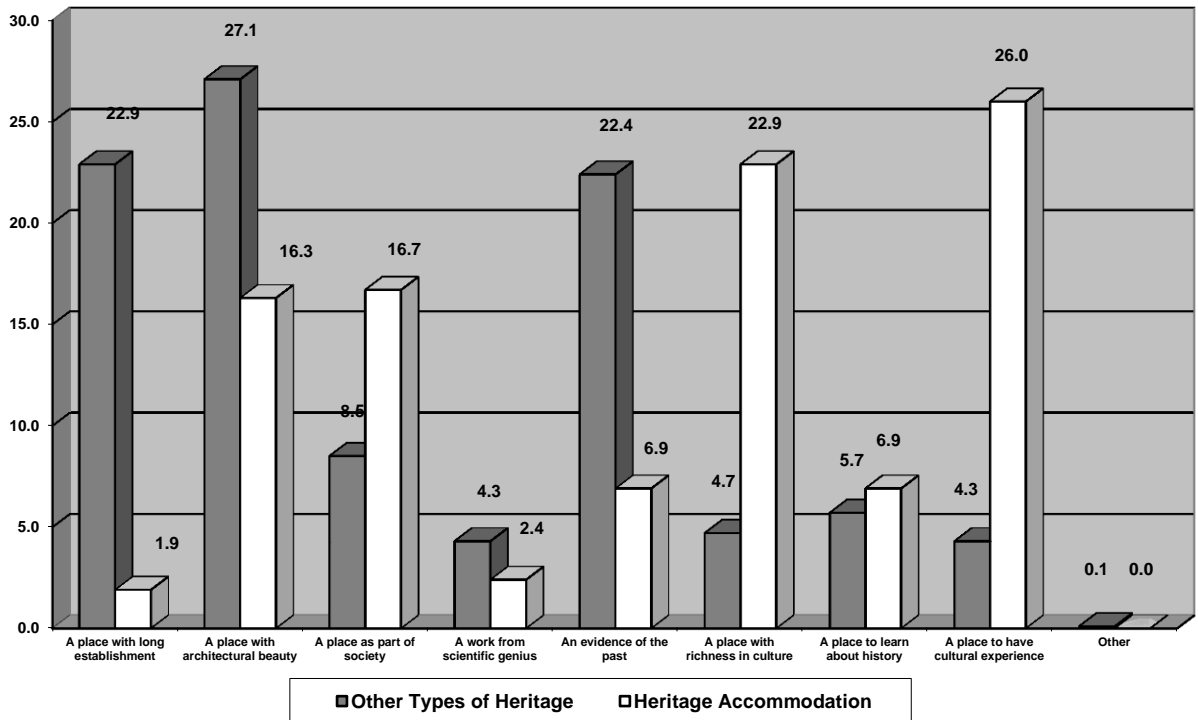
The in-depth study on heritage accommodations in Bangkok found that there are 26 heritage accommodations located in Bangkok in all 4 categories. Among these 4 types, Converted Heritage Accommodation (16) has the highest number of establishment over the past decades follows by Created Heritage Accommodation (4). The surveys on visitors who stayed at these heritage accommodations was undertaken using questionnaire method. It carried out from 300 respondents who were visitors at Converted Heritage Accommodation and Created Heritage Accommodation in Bangkok during September to December 2011. The view of heritage owners was gathered through the interviews of 12 heritage owners during August to November 2011. The results provided 4 new findings on the issue of heritage accommodation and interpretation of culture.

#### **1. Different perceptions between typical heritage and heritage accommodation**

The uniquenesses of heritage accommodation's characteristic and its function led to one of the important questions. How this type of heritage is perceived from the view of visitors and does it is perceived differently from typical heritage? The research (see Fig.1) suggested that although heritage accommodation is considered as heritage with high cultural significance, visitors perceive it differently from other types of heritage. Majority of visitors believe that heritage accommodation is 'A place to have cultural experience' for 26.0%. They also perceived that heritage accommodation is 'A place with richness in culture' (22.9%), 'A place as part of society' (16.7%) and 'A place with architectural beauty' (16.3%). On the other hand, they perceive typical heritage as



‘A place with architectural beauty’ (27.1%), ‘A place with long establishment’ (22.9%) and ‘An evidence of the past’ for (22.4%).



**Fig.1: Visitors’ perception between other types of heritage and heritage accommodation.**

Source: Questionnaire carried out from 300 respondents during September to December 2011.

It became obvious that for heritage accommodation, the issue of culture is highly important from the view of visitors. Heritage accommodation is considered as a place with richness in culture and where they can have their cultural experience while typical heritage is a place of high historical significance. One interesting result was that only 1.9% of visitors perceived heritage accommodation as ‘A place with long establishment’ which was highly different from typical heritage. It seems like for visitors, the age of the building is not important for heritage accommodation and cultural aspect that inherited within heritage accommodation is more significant.

The new understanding on visitors’ perception indicated that heritage accommodation requires more specific approaches for conservation, management and interpretation if the heritage owners concern on visitors’ view. In conservation aspect, it is clear that heritage accommodation undertake the modern idea of conservation by

using adaptive re-used approach, which allows any change to better suit of new function. Historic building does not need to be preserved exactly as its original and this idea is quite different from general conservation approach in Thailand. Most of heritages in Thailand are normally conserved by means of preservation and reconstruction - approaches that attempt to maintain fabric an original materials of building, and discourages new construction, demolition or modification to the building and setting around heritage area. These approaches attempt to represent the originality of heritage as much as possible. The perceptions of visitors indicate less concern on the originality issue of historic building to represent itself as historical evidence. They accept that heritage accommodation is a living place that has been evolved through times and can be changed accordingly. The results indicate that adaptive re-use approach is acceptable for developing historic building as tourist accommodation and gain recognition from tourists who appreciate heritage.

It terms of management, it is important for heritage accommodation to integrate culture into characteristic and services because visitors expect heritage accommodation to be enriched with culture. The design, decoration and ambience of space and environment should represent Thainess or local characteristic that related to host culture.

The interpretation of typical heritage mainly aims to communicate the significance and value of heritage places. However, heritage accommodation can gain more benefits in communicating value and characteristics of Thai culture through the buildings, decoration and services. To effectively communicate value of host country can enrich visitors' experience in staying at heritage accommodation and make them appreciate more on both heritage and Thai culture. The perception of visitors point out that heritage accommodation should play a significant role in promoting Thainess by integrating the characteristic of Thai culture in their sense of place and providing cultural experience to visitors.

## **2. The importance of culture for heritage accommodation**

Why is there a need to communicate the characteristic and value of the host culture at heritage accommodation? Why heritage owner should integrate culture into their heritage? The study strongly indicates that culture is the essential factor for heritage accommodation. When comparing heritage accommodation with other types of tourist

accommodation, the essence of culture of the place becomes more distinct. The richness in culture and the ability to provide intimate cultural experience for visitors have distinguished heritage accommodation from other types of tourist accommodation. There are four main questions use to indicate level of importance of culture to heritage accommodation. The first and second questions asked visitors about the most important aspect and most impressed aspect of heritage accommodation.

According to Fig.2, visitors believed that ‘History and age of the place’(35.7%), ‘Inherited culture and cultural experience’ (21.6%) and ‘Interior decoration and ambience’ (20.3%) are top three most important aspects for heritage accommodation. Visitors also suggested that ‘Inherited culture and cultural experience’ (26.0%) was the most impressed aspect. They also felt that ‘Interior decoration and ambience’ (24.5%) and ‘History and age of the place’ (22.5%) were also most second and third impressed aspects respectively. The top three answers suggested that selected heritage accommodations contained historical, beauty and cultural aspects in the level that reached visitors impression. There was a conflict on the answer as to why visitors believed history and age issues are important character for heritage accommodation but they did not perceived heritage accommodation as a place with long establishment. It could be assumed that visitors believed that history and age are important for its characteristic and recognised it. However, they understand the evolution change and concern more on the issue of culture that can be experienced with. Thus, when second most of them suggested that ‘Inherited culture and cultural experience’ was important aspect became relevant to their perceptions. The two aspects namely ‘Interior decoration and ambience’ and ‘Original beauty of architecture’ were also important for visitors at high level. These indicated that visitors concern about the beauty and appearance of the place they have stayed and therefore it is necessary for owners of heritage accommodation to pay attention on these aspects.

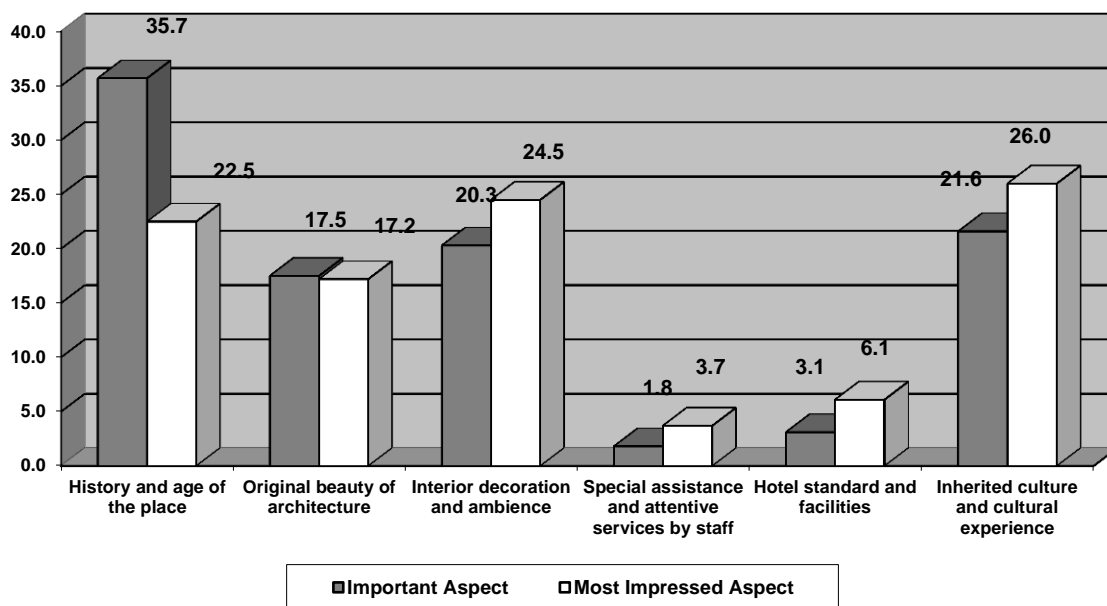


Fig.2: Visitors’ view on important aspect and most impressed aspect of heritage accommodation.

Source: Questionnaire carried out from 300 respondents during September to December 2011.

The third question asked visitors on their expectation. Visitors were asked to choose in what way that their expectations between heritage accommodation and other types of accommodation differ. The results suggested that visitors believed ‘Cultural Experience’ was the primary aspect that is different for 26.3%. The next three expectations were ‘Age of the Building’ for 22.7%, ‘Local Ambience’ for 17.9% and ‘Design of Architecture’ for 16.1%. The last question asked visitors to confirm their belief on what distinguish heritage accommodation from other types of accommodation and 95.4% of visitors confirmed that culture and cultural experience are what they believed to distinguish heritage accommodation from other types of tourist accommodation. It was obvious that when visitors choose to stay at heritage accommodation, they expect to have cultural experience at the place because the experience here is more meaningful compare to other types of accommodation. To learn cooking traditional Thai food or making handicraft at local residence create more related feeling with local culture than doing these activities at high-rise hotel. Having cultural experience at heritage accommodation is more meaningful and exceptional for visitors than having at other types of tourist accommodation because it occurs at the actual and authentic

place with real local people. Additionally, there is no surprising to find out that majority of visitors who stay at heritage accommodation are ‘Sightseeing Cultural Tourists’ or those who have cultural tourism as a key reason. This is relevant to why this group of visitors have high interest on culture of the country they visit and their reason is to stay, learn and appreciate culture of the host country at certain level.

This new finding helps support the assumption on the essence of culture for heritage accommodation and to encourage heritage owners to pay attention on value of Thai culture and attempt to demonstrate the characteristics of Thainess at heritage accommodation. This can be done through the use of interior and decoration, conserving of architecture and environment, providing cultural activities and encouraging interaction with local neighborhood. To have cultural experience about Thai culture seems to be the most important aspect for visitors and this should be integrated into interpretation program for heritage accommodation.

### **3. The importance of beauty over authenticity and comfort**

The issue of authenticity has been recognised as the key essential aspect in heritage conservation practice. The quality of authenticity for heritage is associated with substantial elements of heritage. This is particularly depends on the appearance of heritage and the truthfulness of form, design, use of materials, use of function, spiritual feeling and the sense of place (Wang 1999, p.352). In terms of perception, Ooi (2002, p.89) suggested that tourists develop their own sense of understanding, engagement and authenticity of the product that they consume and in this case is heritage accommodation. It is thus, necessary to learn tourists’ perception on how important of authenticity for heritage accommodation. The research (see Fig.3) shown that visitors believed ‘Beauty’ (40.6%) is the most important aspect for heritage accommodation follows by ‘Authenticity’ (33.2%) and ‘Comfort’ (26.2%). On the other hands, heritage owners ranked ‘Authenticity’ (40.5%), ‘Beauty’ (32.5%) and ‘Comfort’ (27.0%). There is the difference between visitors and heritage owners on what is the most important aspect for them. It can be seen that heritage owners paid more intention to maintain authenticity of the place as they believe authenticity is more important than beauty.

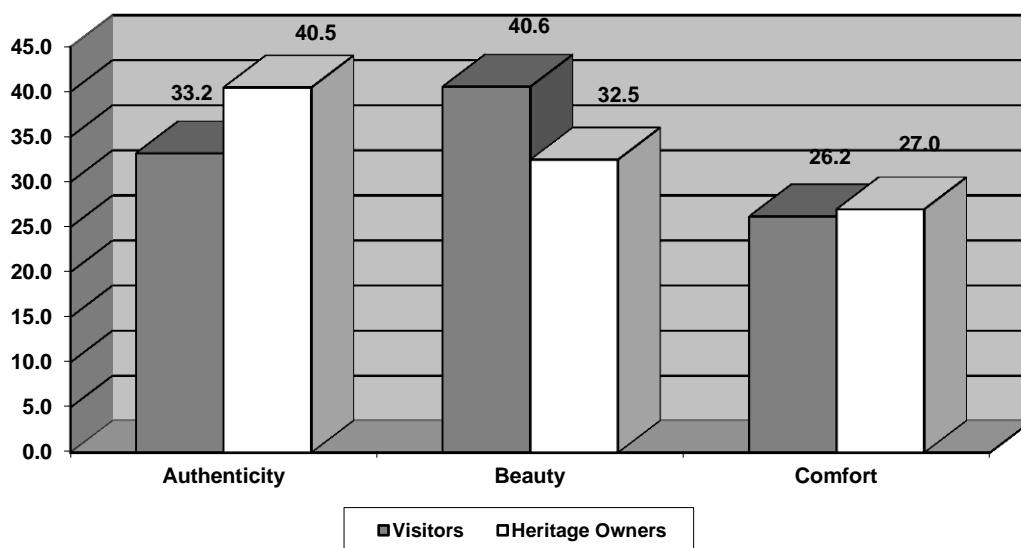


Fig.3: The level of importance between ‘Authenticity’, ‘Beauty’ and ‘Comfort’ from visitors & heritage owners’ views.

Source: Questionnaire carried out from 300 respondents during September to December

2011. Interviews with heritage owners during August to November 2011.

Although heritage owners converted their heritage places into tourist accommodation, they still believed that maintaining authenticity of the place is the most important aspect compared to beauty and comfort. As a result, when they established heritage accommodation, they attempted to maintain the homelike environment, preserve fabric and form of the heritage, used old or old-looking materials at high level because authenticity is used to determine heritage value. Nevertheless, the view of visitors toward the issue of authenticity is also necessary because it impacts how they perceive and expect from heritage accommodation.

The results provided new understanding on how heritage is valued by visitors. Visitors consider authenticity mainly in terms of fabric and form of the building and this is the primary part that should be well preserved. The spirit and feeling of the place for example and the sense of Thai residence can be maintained while the function can be changed. Nevertheless, this aspect is not as much important because they understand that it is no longer the private residence. In terms of use or function, visitors accept the fact that the new function was installed for a tourist accommodation purpose, and so

some necessary changes that make the function to suit new purpose are acceptable for them. The change of function already diminishes the authenticity of the place to some extent but other aspects of authenticity particularly fabric and sense of place can still be conserved. In addition, visitors consider this type of heritage as living heritage which generally continues to evolve through times and from the view of visitors, the changes only slightly discourage heritage value. It is difficult to maintain all aspect of authenticity when establishing heritage accommodation. The visitors' view that mainly focuses on fabric, form and setting of heritage place can be possible accepted.

In terms of visual amenity or beauty, visitors measure beauty by architectural uniqueness and aesthetic, condition of the building, attractiveness of interior and decoration, refinement of material use and construction work, and the peaceful and proper environment inside. Each visitor has their own perception on the meaning of beauty, however in general, it refers to the beauty of heritage building, heritage place and how it can be attractive for them. This criterion has been an important issue for typical tourist accommodation especially hotels. Visitors want to stay in the place with high aesthetic quality, unique and in style. Using adaptive re-used can still maintain the authenticity heritage in terms of its architectural uniqueness and beauty by preserving the fabric and form, improving building to be in good condition and so its aesthetic quality can be well demonstrated.

The comfort issue became the least important aspect for heritage accommodation because visitors understand the limitation of the place that was not originally used as tourist accommodation. However, they still expect certain level of comfort from staying at heritage accommodation and this is why heritage owners need to adjust function to serve them.

For conservation, the key is how to create the balance between 'Authenticity', 'Beauty' and 'Comfort'. Although visitors think beauty is more important, it does not mean that heritage accommodation can be totally changed or abandon its original characteristics. Heritage place should still at least be able to represent its originality through form and fabric. So that visitors can still appreciate the historical and aesthetic value of its significance. At the same time, it is important to create heritage place with high beauty. This aspect also provides view on renovation of heritage as it is possible to make new decoration to interior if it is still related to culture. It is acceptable for any change that helps improving building condition and its appearance if it does not diminish

cultural value of the place. Heritage owners should not also let the building condition to be deteriorated only to maintain authenticity. The beauty of the place should be pleasant and serve the function for visitors as much as possible.

#### **4. Cultural experience at heritage accommodation**

The study confirmed that having a cultural experience at heritage accommodation is more meaningful for them than having it at other types of tourist accommodation. In addition, visitors believe that this is the key to distinguish heritage accommodation from others. The environment of heritage accommodation which highly represent the sense of localness such as Thai residence together with the setting and local people nearby really make visitors feel like they're living within the real local neighborhood. This has strong impact on the visitors' learning experience about culture. The surrounding and local neighborhood provide visitors with opportunity to experience culture in the way that local people do and them to be able to learn, do, act, eat as local. It creates bonding with real local people when they live there and this makes it easier for visitors to become part of the place and with what they have learnt. The effective cultural activities should be able to engage visitors to the sense of place and allow them to interact with local people and place. Interpretation should be able to let them learn about the history and stories of local people, their customs, traditions, practices, beliefs through personal interaction. The new findings encourage heritage owners to provide cultural related experience to their visitors during their stays at heritage accommodation. Interpretation at heritage accommodation should focus on providing culture experience because having cultural experience is the way that visitors' experience at heritage accommodation is enhanced and become memorable.

#### **Conclusion**

The study on heritage accommodation in Bangkok has indicated high level of importance of culture on this particularly type of accommodation particularly both Converted Heritage Accommodation and Created Heritage Accommodation. The most effective way of interpretation of culture is to provide cultural experience for visitors because it has strong impact on their learning experience and appreciation of culture. To effectively establish interpretative program on creating cultural experience for visitors, there are three aspects to be considered namely visitor, environment and interpretation



technique. New findings can be used as theoretical views when developing interpretation program. It should be acknowledged that heritage accommodation should play an important role in communicating the characteristic and value of Thai culture. It should be accepted that heritage accommodation is not only a tourist accommodation that provides overnight stay for foreigners but rather be the learning institution of culture of the host country. This study encourage heritage accommodation to have an open view on the potential use of heritage accommodation in promoting Thai culture and act as cultural interpreter for the oversea visitors who come to Thailand.

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