

The Ecomuseum Mindset of Tamsui Estuary

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Abstract

Tamsui River is the third largest river in Taiwan that has spawned the most prosperous part of the Northern Taiwan flowing into the Taiwan Strait through the Tamsui estuary. Bali and Tamsui are located on the banks of the Tamsui estuary. Tamsui used to be a port where Eastern and Western cultures mingled. The history of varying cultures has been intertwined for thousands of years, accumulating multiple cultures of nutrients. Bali is the archaeological sites since the prehistorical ironwork era. The Shihsanhang Museum and Tamsui Historical Museum are the landmarks of Bali and Tamsui, respectively. The two museums unanimously developed the ecomuseum operations, but the performance varies. Focusing on the marketing of museum and destination contributes to the viability of Tamsui estuary. The study uses the six As framework to evaluate the ecomuseum operations and develops the recommendations for practice.

Keywords Ecomuseum, Tamsui Estuary, Destination marketing

Introduction

In the history of human development, rivers are often closely related to the prosperity of a city. Tamsui River is closely related the development of the Greater Taipei area, which formed by the three major tributaries of Dahanxi, Xindianxi and Keelung River flows into the Taiwan Strait through the Tamsui District of New Taipei City. The length of the main stream and the drainage area are the third largest river in Taiwan, which has spawned the most prosperous part of Northern Taiwan. The left and right banks of Tamsui River are Bali and Tamsui, respectively. Bali was a prehistoric ironware site. Tamsui culture was influenced by China, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Japan, which resulting to many centuries-old heritages. In the early 21st century, the city government set up museums to incorporate the ironware site and the cultural heritages on the banks of the Tamsui River estuary. In addition to the heritage sites, the sunsets, mangrove, and migratory birds of the Tamsui River are precious, making it as the most important tourism destinations in the Northern Taiwan.



Figure 1. Tamsui Estuary

The city government set up The Shihhsanhang Museum and the Tamsui Historical Museums at the banks of Tamsui in the early twenty-first century to preserve the culturally estuary assets. Both museums positioned themselves as the ecomuseum at the beginning of their establishment, but the performance varies. Although good curatorship and general enhancement of collections are the core functions of the museum, a visitor-oriented marketing may support the museum sustained. The museum has always been one of the tourist destinations. In addition to many museums receiving less public funding than before, the increase of ticket sales has been getting important for museum operations. The tourism contrast between the left bank and the right bank of Tamsui Estuary calls the interest of the study. With the Tamsui estuary historical sites as the research context, this study aims to make recommendations for the development of estuary culture based on the viewpoint of destination marketing.

Interwoven ecomuseum, local culture and tourism destination

Traditionally, the museum plays the role of collection, exhibition, education and research. There are three types of the museum. The first is task-oriented museums, which are mostly public and large-scaled museum run by professional curators. The major task is to educate people's specific domain knowledge, and local issues or the market needs are not the focus. The second is shared museums. The owners of such museums are amateurs, interested in sharing their exhibits. The museums have no curating activities and less interactions with local communities or

other museums. The third type is local cultural institutions and ecomuseums which regards individuals, organizations, communities, and NGOs in the society as virtual curators. Such museums are dependent upon substantial active voluntary efforts of the museum and the community which are driven by the local identities and sense of place (Lin, 2013).

Local cultural institutions explore local humanities, art, history, culture, folklore, crafts, landscapes, ecology, industrial resources, etc. to interpret local assets in the most appropriate way through the involvement of local communities and the promotion of community-spirit building. In addition to enabling the local communities to explore local histories and identify sense of places, it provides cultural tourism information for the community and promotes in-depth cultural tourism (Lin, 2013). The conventional ecomuseum advocates community-centered, local governments and local people to brainstorm to present local collective memory, heritage and cultural identity. If the local government is lack of the curators to manage the museum operations and the community management, it is easy to operate without performance. Ecomuseum uses the network system of the core museum and the satellite or quasi-museums through the inter-disciplinary integration and local participation, the local government provides full-time personnel, equipment and resources, and the local communities use their personal resources to display the local collective memory, heritage and cultural identity, and showcase the local stories, customs, and characteristics, etc. to the visitors. The focus of the ecomuseum operation is not on the collection itself, but on the collaboration between the local government and local communities to explore their own stories, present their own space using local cultural assets in a way that can make local communities and visitors appreciate. Given the limited resources of the museum, Lin (2013) suggests that the involvement of enthusiastic stakeholders such as volunteers, players, associations or NGOs of the interest promotes the operation of ecomuseum when the ecomuseum is positioned as an amateur museum. The enthusiasm and interest of the stakeholders promote to explore more related issues about their collections or cultural assets. Further, the stakeholders have richer stories to share with the others which helps the collection and display of the museums. Such sharing boosts the education and research of the museum (Chang, 1996; Lin, 2013).

The local communities and visitors are the audience of the museum. However, the audience of the museum should not be limited to the audience, the tourists and the dents near the museum are the audiences to be attracted by the museum (Rivière, 1985). The audience-oriented approach is in line with the destination marketing (Siano et al., 2010) which guides the tourism impacts optimization and the maximization of benefits for the ecomuseum or the place. A destination comprise a core of six As including attractions (natural, man-made, heritage, and special events), accessibility (entire transportation system), amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services), available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals), activities (all activities available at the destination and what tourists will do during their visit) , and ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, tele-communications, post, hospitals, etc.) (Buhalis, 2000). A destination can be regarded as an amalgam of museum collections, facilities and services and experiences provided by the ecomuseum. Destination marketing devises to meet the unique needs and the characteristics of the destination coupled with increasing visitation (Buhalis, 2000). Strategic destination marketing helps enhance the long-tern prosperity of the local people, delight visitors by maximizing their satisfaction, maximize profitability of local business and maximize multiplier effects, and optimize tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs (Buhalis, 2000). In accordance with the stakeholders' benefits and the strategic marketing objectives, the performance of ecomuseum operation improves.

1. Tourism destination of Tamsui Estuary

Bali and Tamsui are at the junction of the Guanyin Mountain and the Tamsui Estuary. The natural landscape is bred by the Tamsui River and Guanyin Mountain, creating a rich and diverse waterfront and mountain ecosystem. The sunset on Tamsui estuary and the mangrove reserve have attracted many tourists to stop by.

1.1. Tamsui

Tamsui is not only the place with the highest cultural asset density in Taiwan, but also the highest density of museums. In the early 16th century, Taiwan's

position in China, South Korea, Japan and the Nanyang Islands was highlighted. It highlighted the important defensive nature of Tamsui and the frequent exchange of ships at sea, and became an important base for economic, political and military affairs. Therefore, Tamsui has become a battleground for the military. In the 17th century, the Spaniards built Santo Domingo in Tamsui for a shipping supply station. Later the fortress destroyed, the Dutch then rebuilt it in 1641 and named it Fort Anthonio. The main structure has been retained to date.

In the 18th century, there were Han Chinese who came from China to Taiwan. They brought the latest farming techniques and the gods of their hometowns. They build temples to keep the gods near the pier. For example, the Fuyou Palace was built in 1782, Yisan Temple was in 1822, and the Longshan Temple was in 1858. These temples were built by the craftsman from different ethnic group of China and were accordingly full of diverse cultural features. Tamsui became a commercial port in the 19th century. Many Westerners came to Taiwan for business, commission, or missionaries. Western-style architectures were constructed and decorated at that time. Among them, Hobe MacKay Hospital from Canada established the MacKay Clinic in 1879 and the Tamsui Oxford College in 1882. The British government built the Customs Wharf in 1862, the Tax Bureau in 1858 and the British Consular Residence in 1891. The British businessman Francis Cass established the Oil Warehouse in 1894. In 1895, the Japanese governed Taiwan, bring about many Japanese-style and Japanese-Western mixed buildings. All these mixture of Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Spanish, British, and Canadian reaches a wonderful cultural exchange in Tamsui.

In 2005, New Taipei City Government (abbreviated as NTPC) amalgamated thirty-three buildings or constructions, four intangible cultural assets and one monument to apply for the UNESCO World Heritage registry. NTPC established Tamsui Heritage Museum and connected it and private heritages to form a museum alliance to make Tamsui a borderless ecomuseum. The attempt to connect the public museum with the private heritages is to preserve and present the natural and artificial ecology of Tamsui and the historical sites of the port, and to sustain the local culture through the public and private partnership. Several community development associations and Tamsui Culture Foundation are actively involved with the museological activities and in the cultural development and education.

1.2. Bali

The old name of Bali in Ching Dynasty was Shihsanhang Village in which thirteen traders lived. Bali is at the junction of Guanyin Mountain, Tamsui estuary, and Taiwan Strait, and is known as the Andesite rock processing industry. The Shihsanhang cultural relics in Bali is one of the important archaeological sites in the northern Taiwan from which excavated pottery, ironwork, tombs and other rich prehistoric relics exists since prehistorical era. NTPC established the Shihsanhang Museum in 2003 to preserve the underneath relics. At the time of its setup, the Shihsanhang Museum is committed to act as an ecomuseum that interacts and develops with the local community. The city government improved transportation and surrounding tourism infrastructure that promoted the economic development of the place through the establishment of the museum. The museum becomes a tourism landmark of Bali with which is surrounded by the diverse heritage sites, natural reserves, waterfront landscapes, historical folklore, industrial culture and public facilities.

1.3. Comparison of Tamsui and Bali

According to the statistics of Tourism and Travel Department, NTPC, the number of tourists in Tamsui are more than that in Bali. There were 4.5 million tourists visiting Tamsui in 2017 and 0.96 million visiting Tamsui Historical Museum and there were 3.2 million tourists visiting Bali in 2017 and 0.6 million people visiting the Shihsanhang Museum.

This study uses six as to analyze destination, i.e. attractions, accessibility, amenities, available package, activities, and ancillary services (Buhalis, 2000). Regarding the accessibility and ancillary services, the infrastructure development of Bali and Tamsui is similar because they are two neighboring districts of New Taipei City in Taiwan. The quantity and quality of the amenities in Tamsui is better than those in Bali because there are more third industrial sectors in Tamsui, and more secondary industrial sectors in Bali. With more convenient transportation and commercial activities, Tamsui has always been the most important tourist attraction in the Greater Taipei area.

In addition to the Tamsui Historical Museum, popular tourism spots contain Fishermans' Wharf, Fuyo Temple, Golden River Bank, Longsan Temple, Tamsui

Old Street, Tamsui Oxford College, Yisan Temple etc. The number of tourists in Fishermans' Wharf and Golden River Bank are much more than the number of tourists in Tamsui Historical Museum. The famous scenic zone in Wazihwei Mangrove Reserve, Bali is called the Left Bank Park. The number of tourists in the Left Bank Park is five to six times of the number in Shihsanhang Museum.

The operation of all museums depends on the visitors of the museum. Although the number of visitors can not directly explain the experience of the visitors and the quality of the museum, it can still be used as the basis for the evaluation of the museum. According to the literature (Lin, 2006; Tang, 2012), most of the museum visitors were sporadic explorers who visited for leisure or recreation. When the visitors choose Tamsui estuary as a destination for tourism and leisure activities, they may choose to enter or not to enter the museum. The number of tourists shows that the tourists choose not to enter the museums. When the tourists do not enter the museum, the effectiveness of museological education and exhibition becomes an issue.

Table 1. Number of tourists

Year	Left Bank Park, Bali	Golden Riverbank, Tamsui	Shihsanhang Museum, Bali	Tamsui Museums, Tamsui
2013	2,745,000	2,953,000	841,309	4,436,396
2014	3,018,500	3,402,500	969,677	4,634,704
2015	3,292,500	3,369,776	981,301	4,615,733
2016	3,252,177	4,553,901	655,779	4,340,641
2017	3,464,000	4,716,000	568,900	3,499,021

Fisherman's Wharf, Fort Antonio, Little White House, Hobe Fort

Source: Tourism and Travel Department, New Taipei City Government

Recommendation for the value added by ecomuseum and destination marketing

Tourism destination can be regarded as a combination of all products, services

and ultimately experiences provided locally. Based on the six As framework to analyze the Tamsui estuary as a tourism destination, Bali and Tamsui are qualified to be a tourism destination. The earlier sections introduce the attractions in Bali and Tamsui containing natural attractions and man-made, artificial, purpose built cultural and tourism assets. The accessibility is no question that the transportation comprises mass rapid transit (MRT) from Taipei to Tamsui, bicycle ways along with Tamsui River, and ferries between Bali and Tamsui. The quality and quantities of amenities and ancillary services in Tamsui are better than those in Bali.

Concerning the museological activities, the ecomuseum advocates the participation of local governments and local communities. If the interaction between two parties is less than expected, it may ruin the spirit of the ecomuseum. Both Shihhsanhang Museum and Tamsui Heritage Museums were directed by the ecomuseum at the beginning, it is a pity that the Shihhsanhang museum operation has returned to the curating operation which is inclined to a closed system rather than an open system (Lin, 2013). The number of visitors to Shihhsanhang museum is decreasing and the connection with community residents is weakening (Lin, 2012).

To increase the ecomuseological activities, the Tourism and Travel Department of the New Taipei City Government may connect the cultural tourism resources on both banks of the Tamsui River and re-embraces the spirit of the ecomuseum. Tamsui estuary has rich tourism resources on both banks because of Guanyin Mountain and the estuary. The sunset and mangroves are the most important natural tourism resources, and the Shihhsanhang culture and the Dapenkeng culture originated from the prehistoric era, and the Tamsui western culture began in the seventeenth century, making the culture on Tamsui estuary diverse. However, the museums are administered by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the NTPC. The tourism affairs are administered by the Tourism and Travel Department of NTPC. The citizen affairs are handled by the Tamsui District Office and the Bali District Office, respectively. This study recommends to lower the governance barriers among the culture, education, and tourism affairs. The Tourism and Travel Department of NTPC acts as the leader to build an ad-hoc team to coordinate the ecomuseum of Tamsui Estuary. In addition to inviting official representatives, the community is necessary to add value for marketing the Tamsui estuary.

The community members who are sensitive to the local activities available at the Tamsui estuary can be from the local people or the virtual communities. The community members may act as the right storytellers to reflect the Tamsui estuary activities. They have the right skills, influence and creativity to turn their experiences into attractive stories that reach the museum audience and deliver a compelling message. For example, the Shihhsanhang Museum has presented underwater archaeological mystery in a virtual reality and augmenting the reality since 2015, which allows the museum to expand from onshore archaeology to underwater archaeology. The richness of the exhibits of the museum has been innovated. However, the numbers of visitors to the museum are decreasing. It is possible that the innovation is top-down, but it is out of touch with the audience life.

Finally, university social responsibility helps boost the community's social innovation activities by mingling the marine culture and Tamsui estuary culture with the operation of ecomuseum. All the universities and community volunteers jointly develop the intellectual platform for networking the culture and local development needs of the Tamsui estuary to jointly promote the richness of marine culture narratives.

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