ASEAN Tourism Policy and Tourism Development in the Southern Part of the Lao PDR

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1. Introduction

Tourism is the world’s largest industry. By the late 1990s, an unprecedented number of people were traveling around the world, crossing national borders, mostly for sightseeing. This phenomenon has had a powerful influence not only on world trade and commerce but also on the ways in which people see cultures. The number of international tourists is projected to reach more than 1.6 billion by 2020, while revenues will rise to US $8.0 trillion in gross output a year (World Tourism Organization 1995; Engelhardt 1999). Tourism is a sector that commercial and industrial sectors cannot neglect.

Researchers of tourism agree that tourism is growing most rapidly in the Asia-Pacific region. The World Tourism Organization expects that, by 2020, the Asia-Pacific region, with a 7 percent annual growth rate in international arrivals alone, will surpass America and Europe to become the world’s most popular tourism destination (Engelhardt 1999).

In the Asia-Pacific region, both the private sector and the official organizations aim to support the development of tourism as it is a profitable business. The World Travel and Tourism Council reports that capital investment in the Pacific Rim economies to support travel and tourism industries will total more than US $900 billion by 2020 (World Travel and Tourism Council report 1998, cited in Engelhardt 1999).

In this trend, without a doubt, tourism development is one of the most important concerns for the “developing states,” including the Southeast Asian states. State officials of Southeast Asia maintain that tourism will provide the nation and local communities with large profits. In some Southeast Asian states, redistribution of the national income to rural communities is essential, since local people’s demands for a share of the profits has visibly increased.

For ASEAN members who need to redistribute benefits to rural communities, tourism development is beneficial, for two reasons. First, tourism development requires less installment and investment of funds and other resources than the heavy industries do. For governments,
tourism may bring revenue without much effort. It is not necessary to invest in expensive infrastructure such as water-supply facilities, industrial-waste neutralization, or supply-chain establishment, unlike with heavy industries. Second, the tourist industry is visible to local people. It is obvious to locals that the number of foreign tourists is increasing and that they spend money at local restaurants or hotels and buy local products as souvenirs. With this visibility, the governments can demonstrate their capacity to help local communities profit.

2. Research Purpose

Understanding the beneficial aspects, ASEAN member states have already been concerned with tourism development. With the aim of sharing all profits with the member states, the ASEAN countries have set up a common policy and guidelines of tourism development. In this way the ASEAN standardized the implementation of tourism development within the South-east Asian region. This policy has given authorization only to officially recognized tourism development programs as having the “brand name” of ASEAN tourism. It is of great importance particularly for the states, including Lao PDR, which acquired membership relatively late, to have the capacity to follow ASEAN standards, and to pass the qualification for obtaining membership in ASEAN since they want to be more officially recognized by other countries in the world, and in turn to have more credits from those countries, and promote trades with them (Villacorta 2014).

Previous studies of Southeast Asian countries have rather broadly discussed the ASEAN politics with a focus on organizational development and the political and economic agenda (Villacorta 2014). Those arguments examined a larger political framework but overlooked tourism development as one of the important points on the agenda. Some studies have been interested in tourism development policy at the national level but did not pay much attention to the local people’s reactions to the policy or how those policies have affected local people’s ideas on tourism.

Hence, in this paper, I would first like to examine ASEAN tourism policy, as well as nation-level and local-government-level tourism policies. In doing so, I elucidate how local residents perceive those policies and how people apply the formal framework to the tourist services they offer.

After examining the tourism policy, I would like to look closely at a World Heritage Site in Lao PDR. The heritage site is located on Champasak Province, in the southern part of the Lao
PDR. The heritage site, officially called “Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape,” was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2001. Since I and my colleague, Odajima, conducted field research at this area before the World Heritage nomination, and our field research has continued to this day, we have a large data set on the tourism development there (Odajima 2004, 2005, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018a, 2018b). The present research was conducted by analyzing the data we collected.

3. ASEAN Policy on Tourism Development: Historical Background

Since the early 1980s, tourism development has been one of the most important priorities for ASEAN countries (Hitchcock et al. eds. 2010; Harrison and Schipani 2009). Politically, it is believed to provide a good reason for peaceful relationships in the ASEAN region.

Economically, it is also expected to provide considerable benefits to the countries. The countries that became the initial members of ASEAN, such as Thailand were examples of this. In order to standardize the quality of tourism, ASEAN set up a series of sociopolitical and politico-economic agendas regarding tourism development.

ASEAN policy in this period is characterized as follows:

1) Tourism development might be a good tool for all nations for establishing peaceful relationships.

2) The benefits from tourism development have to be shared with all nations.

3) ASEAN supports each member country’s policy to promote tourism development.

The most significant statement of the ASEAN policy is that ASEAN intended to quantitatively share benefits by increasing visitors. The policy also aimed to increase the quality of tourism. The attractive points of Southeast Asia surely include the diversity of its natural environment. This diversity has historically led to cultural diversity. The cultural diversity, in turn, attracts tourists from all over the world. Ironically, however, the standardization of the tourism industry risks homogenizing cultural practices in the ASEAN region, since the standardization includes not only hardware such as roads, information facility, but hosts’ services or food tastes, then it may touch on cultural matter. These human behaviors are often related to deeply cultural practices, and therefore different among the social groups. One of the attractive points of tourism is to find out cultural differences, and even if a short period, tourists would like to indulge in a different culture, as if they are local community members.

Another notable point of ASEAN policy until the early 2000s was to “do the same thing
together,” looking at ASEAN as one large, integrated tourism market.

There are eight points in the ASEAN agenda (Harrison and Schipani 2009):

1) Making an action plan that covers the whole area of ASEAN
2) Environment-concerned policy
3) Intellectual tourism
4) Establishing a unified quality standard of tourism
5) Exploring human resources and enhancing human capacity through tourism development
6) Seeking better connectivity in transportation within the ASEAN area
7) Promoting international as well as multinational investments
8) Enhancing sustainable peace and socio-political stability

4. Tourism Development in Lao PDR: Historical Background

In 1997, Lao PDR became a member state of ASEAN. At that time, the integration of Lao PDR in ASEAN was still weak, as was the integration of Lao tourism in ASEAN. Until 1995, Lao PDR did not accept international tourists in the form of individual tourists. They had accepted tourists only in groups (Harrison and Schipani 2009; Nishimura 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010; Thelabout 2003). Since 1996, the government has made its first priority the eradication of poverty, and moving out of the UN category of “least developed country” by 2020. The government noted tourism as a key potential industry to accomplish this.

By the late 1990s, tourism had become the country’s most important industry. In 2014, tourism was the second-biggest export industry. In 2018, it was the fourth-biggest.

Like other countries in Southeast Asia, the Lao government’s tourism policy was primarily oriented toward maintaining administrative control over all kinds of tourism operations (e.g., Ballard 2007:13). Policy makers were therefore focused primarily on the degree to which tourism could contribute to the overall growth of the economy (Ballard 2007). Early tourism policies sought to increase the number of international tourists as a means to stimulate job creation, generated income, earn foreign exchange and improve the image of the country, largely in order to attract increased levels of foreign direct investment (Ballard 2007:13). Therefore, their approach was the so-called “numbers-oriented policy (Ballard 2007:13).”

According to Ballard, during this period in the history of tourism development, the relationship between government plans and private investors is often characterized by policy tensions concerning the number of tourists and the potential negative impacts of unregulated
tourism development (Ballard 2007:13).

The initial stage of tourism development of the Lao PDR was characterized by a numbers-oriented approach. In this stage, the government promoted tourism sectors to expand the range of tourism (i.e. increase in the number of tourist sites), and also promote the quality of tourism products, based on the assumption that more spending by a larger number of tourists during longer stays would benefit all of society (e.g. Ballard 2007:13).

This government-lead tourism gradually contributed to the overall economic development, and finally the private sectors recognized that it provided large potentials to the increase in their household economy after the 2000s (Ballard 2007; Committee for Planning and Investment 2006). After this period, the foreign investments significantly increased, and a building boom of expensive hotels and restaurants arrived to large cities in the Lao PDR.

It was also of great importance for the private sectors to join the trend of the tourism development, although they may not have clearly understood what the tourism was, or even what the government intended in terms of tourism development. Since during the 2000s, small guesthouses and restaurants increased in number. Those were built one after another, and side by side on the streets in major cities or towns such as Pakse or Champasak District.

5. Lao Government Policy toward Tourism Development at the Present

In order to promote the tourism industry, the Lao government had to accept ASEAN policy. Lao PDR had to do so to attract the interest of people living and visiting neighboring ASEAN countries. For this reason, the government made efforts to follow the quality standards that were inscribed in ASEAN’s policy. The government also intended to improve connectivity to neighboring countries in terms of transportation and information. In order to do so, the Lao government had to tackle major difficulties.

To summarize the problems of tourism development in Lao PDR, there are three points.

1) The Lao government recognizes that the infrastructure (e.g. roads, hospitals) has to be improved quickly for incoming visitors. They also think it is necessary to establish telecommunications facilities for rural tourism development.

2) The government also recognized that there was a lack of knowledge concerning how to deal with international tourism.

3) There is a serious shortage of people who could be engaged in the tourism industry. Only a few qualified guides work at the tourism companies. Furthermore, there is few trained staff at hotels or guesthouses in the rural areas.
In order to tackle these problems, the government has taken the following actions:

1) They have invited foreign investment and international financial agencies such as the Asian Development Bank into the tourism sector.

2) They have created government-organized tourist businesses (e.g., Lao Airlines) and issued a certificate for official guides. Currently, there are three kinds of guides: a) a national guide, who can accompany tourists to any place in the country; b) a local guide, who specializes in a local area; c) a site guide, who specializes in one particular site.

3) They have established tourism-related vocational schools or university departments, such as the Department of Tourism at Champasak University.

As a result, the government's recent statistics and other international agencies' statistics show a large and rapid increase in the number of international tourists, and in national revenue from the tourism industry.

Analyzing Lao government policy and statistics, we can note four points:

1) Tourism development in Lao P.D.R has a very short history.

2) Though this history has been short, development has been rapid.

![Graph showing No. of Tourist Arrivals](image)

Source: *Statistical Report on Tourism in Laos 2018*. Published by Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of the Government of Lao P.D.R. in 2018. (The graph was made by the author on the basis of the original data.)

Fig. 1 No. of Tourist Arrivals.
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**Fig. 2** Average Length of Stay (Days) for International Tourists.

**Fig. 3** Revenue from Tourism (U.S. Dollars)

Source: *Statistical Report on Tourism in Laos 2018*. Published by Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of the Government of Lao P.D.R. in 2018. (The graph was made by the author on the basis of the original data.)
3) The eradication of poverty is the central concern of the nation, and tourism development is seen as a good tool for this purpose.
4) Policy is to be applied top-down.

After the Lao government made efforts toward solving its problems, ASEAN praised Lao PDR.

6. Case Study: Tourism Development at the Champasak World Heritage Site

A. Historical Background of the Champasak World Heritage Site

I have been engaged in field research in Champasak, Lao PDR, since 1997. It was in 2001 that architectural, historic-monument, and archaeological sites, as well as the surrounding natural environments, were jointly placed on the World Heritage list, entitled “Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape,” which is situated in Champasak.

Since 2001, the Lao government and the Champasak provincial government have made efforts to accomplish at least two goals: 1) the restoration of architectural sites, and investigation of historical monuments and archaeological sites; and 2) the promotion of tourism.

Both projects have steadily been progressing. The government concentrated its energy on promoting tourism development. As mentioned above, tourist policy is the means by which the national government is expected to redistribute the revenue to local people. They applied ASEAN policy to the national agenda and transmitted it to the local government.

The Champasak local government also expects to have more tourists, since the nomination of the site to the World Heritage list gave a guarantee of the site’s value and definitely helped to upgrade the branding quality of the site.

The national government relied on the local government to implement the tourism development plan at the Champasak World Heritage Site. The central government transmitted the funds that were given to the Lao government from the Japanese government in the form of bilateral grassroots assistance (Nishimura 2004a).

After receiving the funds from the national government, the Champasak provincial government used them mainly for the conservation of heritage buildings and archaeological sites and the preparation of tourism development (Nishimura 2004a).

The Champasak district, which includes the central World Heritage area, was not easy for visitors to reach in 2001. To get there, tourists had to travel along Road 13, on the eastern
bank of the Mekong River. This meant crossing the river. All told, it took more than four hours to get there from the provincial capital, Pakse.

In 2014, the provincial government started the construction of a new road (Road 14A) which ran directly from Pakse to Champasak district alongside the western bank of the Mekong River. The road was to enter Papiine village, go to Thangkhop village via Nong Vien village, reached Dongthalat, and continued to Sukhuma district (Nishimura 2015).

A number of villagers supported this plan; however, UNESCO and other agencies who conducted the research project expressed great concern. Their objections were twofold: 1) the road would be constructed too close to the core of the Champasak World Heritage Site, especially the Ancient City; 2) the road would only provide economic benefits to Pakse, the capital of Champasak Province. However, in the interest of Champasak villagers’ convenience, those consequences were overlooked by the government of Champasak Province.

Even before the road construction, the Champasak government altered the landscape around the Champasak World Heritage Site. They intended to make a park around the Vat Phou temple complex. For this purpose, they relocated a part of Nongsa, the village that was located next to the Vat Phou temple complex; the village of Nongsa has historically engaged in activities related to the Champasak area since the Old Kingdom period (Odajima 2014).

The road construction was implemented outside the buffer zone of the Champasak World Heritage Site. Due to the strong advice of UNESCO, road construction was suspended from Vat Thong village southward, since they were afraid that the road was too close to the Ancient City site and might even destroy part of the wall of the Ancient City site through the vibrations generated not only from the road’s construction but also from the traffic once the road was completed.

Although the construction of Road
No. 14A was suspended within the Champasak World Heritage zone, the government pursued tourism development. Inviting international funds such as from the Asian Development Bank or bilateral funds from foreign countries such as Japan, France, Switzerland, and Germany, the provincial government highlighted the following advantages (Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism 2018):

1) Access to Champasak is now relatively good. Tourists can enter Champasak Province by flying to Pakse International Airport. They can also come to Champasak by land by crossing the international border with Thailand (Vang Tao [called Chon Mek by the Thais]) or with Cambodia (Nong Nokkhi) [called Stung Treng by the Cambodians]).

2) The infrastructure has been significantly improved through a relatively large investment from the Asian Development Bank and other foreign countries. Tourists can easily access major historical sites, enjoy the local food at good restaurants, and stay at the resort-type accommodations and hotels comfortably.

3) There are more than 50,000 residents within the World Heritage area alone. Although about 80 percent of them are farmers, they are aware of tourism development and are ready to receive international tourists. They could receive tourists with hospitality.

7. Information from the Field Research

As mentioned above, I have conducted my own field research in Champasak since 1997. Although the main purpose of my research was not tourism development but heritage conservation, tourism has been one of the most important topics. Since 2002, after the World Heritage
nomination of the Champasak heritage site, I had to concern myself more seriously with tourism, because I found that heritage conservation and tourism development were often opposed to each other. Therefore, I have periodically organized interviews with the local government, the local people (including owners of local enterprises such as restaurants, guesthouses, and resorts), and tourists. And as far as tourism is concerned, the main points of each stakeholders’ views have not changed since I started my research on tourism development in the southern part of the Lao PDR near the Cambodian border in 2007 (Nishimura 2008). In 2018, I reviewed my research on tourism development in Champasak with the most recent information from the fieldwork; the information was almost the same as that of 10 years ago. This is summarized as follows:

<Feedback of Champasak Provincial Government>
1. As planned, there is great progress on infrastructure development.
2. More infrastructure is needed, especially a road around the Vat Phou area.
3. More accommodations are needed.
4. The number of resort-type accommodations has increased.

<Feedback of Champasak People>
1. The new road construction has made travel more convenient.
2. Only a few people stay in Champasak. Many stay in Champasak only for one or two hours.
3. They do not even eat lunch in Champasak.
4. The household-level economy has gotten worse year after year.
5. They never visited the information center and never saw the guide maps.

<Feedback of Tourists>
Based upon their statements, we identify two types of tourist groups.
Type I: Tourists visiting Vat Phou and neighboring sites
1. There are not many places to visit.
2. Compared to Angkor, the size of the sites is small.
3. The road to Champasak is good.
4. It is better to stay in and eat in Pakse.
5. They were not aware that there is an information center.
Type 2: Tourists staying at a guesthouse in Champasak district

1. The quiet environment is rewarding.
2. They hope Champasak stays as it is now.
3. The local food and accommodation are enjoyable.
4. They did not know about the information center.
5. They never noticed the maps or signboards for visitors.

8. Various Perspectives

1) Two Kinds of Tourism Development

The field research indicates that there are two different kinds of tourism development in Champasak. One is carried out by the national and provincial governments, and the other is carried out by local people in Champasak.

<Official Tourism>

The government considers the recent increase in tourists to be concrete evidence of their success in following ASEAN policies and standards on a nationwide level; in terms of the tourism industry, there is no gap between Laos and other ASEAN countries (e.g., ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Award 2019).

Given the success of their policy, and the anticipation of considerable revenue from tourism development, the provincial government has promoted an ambitious tourism development plan—setting up the immigration process at the borders with Thailand and Cambodia and improving infrastructure by creating new large resorts and new roads (personal communication with the local officers of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Champasak 2018).

The official planners have clearly expressed their preference: they want to target wealthier tourists who may be interested in the resort-type hotels, and they much prefer wealthy tourists to backpackers (personal communication with local officers 2018). The provincial plan hopes to create a new “Lao tourism brand”(5) certified by ASEAN. What they want is high-quality tourism in Champasak.

<Tourist Services of Local Lao People>

Local residents do not know the goals and targets of the official plan. They are actually not involved in the given tourism development plan. Many people are interested in income-generat-
ing activities, since their standard of living has always been marginal. They expect to join tourism-related businesses, such as running guesthouses or restaurants, and get involved in the competitive tourism industry.

Many people had few opportunities to learn how to run a tourism-related business. They barely know the government guidelines. They run their businesses only by imitating other people’s practices. Their ideas about and style of tourist services come from their familiar everyday practice of Lao agrarian society (Nishimura 2008a, 2010; Odajima 2004, 2005, 2014, 2018a). The tourism development seen among the local communities is a cultural matter and has nothing to do with establishing the “ASEAN tourism brand” in the rural areas.

2) Interpretation of the Results

The results are, in some respects, ironic. The provincial plan emphasizes the importance of the construction of the new road, as it connects the provincial capital with rural places and other cities, so that more tourists can easily visit the Champasak World Heritage Site. Moreover, this new road could bring additional benefits to rural areas like the Champasak district, according to the plan.

The new road, to some extent, would make life more convenient for local people. Before the road was constructed, the people of Champasak district had to cross the Mekong River on a ferry to get to Pakse, which took more than four hours. Now local people can get to Pakse in 30 minutes via the new road.

Almost one year after that part of the new road was constructed, a negative result has emerged. Fewer tourists stay in Champasak district, and more tourists stay in the provincial capital, Pakse. Currently, tourists choose to stay in accommodations in Champasak district for a few nights at most. Many tourists, who expect an aesthetic travel experience, see the accommodations and restaurants in Champasak district as not-fancy-looking. The locally developed tourist facilities, which provide only local food, are, in the opinion of international tourists, not worth spending money on. Because more luxurious hotels have been built and Western-style restaurants have opened in the provincial capital, many tourists choose to return there after a day trip to the district.

Ironically, the more convenient the transportation became, the more marginalized residents ended up, although they were the people who have long protected and managed the World Heritage area. A new center-periphery relationship is emerging between the provincial capital and the district, and there is still poverty in the rural areas.
9. Summary of the Research

There are two different types of tourist industry in Champasak. One is implemented by the stakeholders of the central and local governments. They are enthusiastic about developing the tourism industry in Champasak. For them, tourism is directly related to material aspects, especially infrastructure in Champasak. They are happy to show the statistics of tourism development of Champasak Province, indicating a rapid increase in the number of visitors. They are also happy to present the improvements on the host side, namely the increase in the number of accommodations, especially high-class resorts and hotels, and restaurants. They also proudly note that revenue from the tourism industry is rapidly increasing.

When showing this evidence, they say that they have been able to reach the standard set down by ASEAN. In this regard, the ASEAN policy on tourism development has steadily become integrated into the policy of the Lao government. The goal of the tourism development of ASEAN and the Lao government has been accomplished. For them, it is of great importance to achieve ASEAN standards, because their goal is to prove that they are able to catch up to world standards and become a member of the world community.

On the other hand, we see another kind of tourism development being conducted by the local people of Champasak. The local people’s idea of tourism is not really the “structured tourism” set by ASEAN and the Lao government. I call this type of tourism “para-tourism.” By “structured tourism”, I mean that the authorities give tourism formats which can be seen elsewhere in Southeast Asia. “Para-tourism” does not follow these formats, because it is created among local circles. Because the local people may not really understand the structured tourism, they offer a kind of para-tourism, which is derived from the hospitality that is deeply rooted in their culture.

Within this framework, they open restaurants, guesthouses, and other tourism-related facilities. In Champasak district, we see many such tourism facilities almost side by side, even if tourists show no interest in patronizing them. Interestingly, the offerings of those facilities are more or less the same. Since their hospitality is rooted in their culture, they do what they think will please their guests.

Since they share the same culture, they communicate easily with each other about what to do for guests. Thus they pay attention to others who attract many guests, and they copy their practices. This is why we see the same kinds of restaurants and guesthouses in a relatively small area in Champasak district.
Interestingly, the two types of tourist services correspond exactly to the two types of tourists visiting Champasak. As we have seen, one group of tourists appreciates the structured tourism development. They like those accommodations or restaurants, and thus they typically stay in Champasak district for only a few hours and then go back to Pakse.

Looking at the statements of tourists, however, those who like the local culture of Champasak have more appreciation for the latter type of tourist services offered by local people. They stay longer in Champasak district and enjoy discovering different cultural practices. Thus they enjoy eating local food and even being immersed in “inconvenient” conditions.

Since we see interrelationships between ASEAN, the Lao government, and local people’s practice in terms of tourism development, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the ASEAN agenda contains a contradiction. ASEAN asks member countries to follow the ASEAN standard, which aims to standardize the quality of tourism throughout a whole area. In doing so, they expect that the whole area will benefit equally from tourism development.

However, this policy risks causing the homogenization of the ASEAN area and the cultural diversity that has made Southeast Asia attractive enough to draw many tourists from all over the world. This tendency is most visible at low-end tourism development sites, such as Champasak district.

Finally, we should recall the words of researchers concerning tourism development since the early 1990s. They said that to pursue sustainable tourism development, we have to redirect the tourism industry, as well as government policy, from a wider perspective concerning the public good, not only for ourselves but for future generations (e.g., Engelhardt 1999; Hitchcock et al. 2010b; Nishimura 2008a).

10. Conclusion

The present research examines how ASEAN’s policy of tourism development has been adopted by the Lao government and the people of Lao PDR. To examine this research question, I use field data collected in Champasak district, Champasak Province, located in the southern part of Lao PDR, since the World Heritage Site and other historical or natural sites attract a large and growing number of tourists.

As a result, we see that there are two types of tourism offered in Champasak. One is the government-made tourism that aims to establish a high-quality tourism by adopting ASEAN standards. We see that they are trying to establish a Lao brand of tourism.

On the other hand, local people provide another kind of tourist services. They carry on the
tourism business in their own way—by learning from their neighbors. If their neighbor’s business succeeds, they imitate it. Thus, their business has nothing to do with the government-directed tourist industry, or with ASEAN policy.

Tourism is the most promised industry in Lao PDR, therefore, they accept ASEAN policy. However, as this paper has shown, there is great variety in tourism development. We need to look more closely at tourism within the framework not only of national policy but also of local practice in Southeast Asia.

Notes
(1) The present research was/is funded by JSPS research fund (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkoukai Kagaku-Kenkyu-Hi) No. 25501021 (2013–2015), No. 16K02086 (2016–2018), and No. 19K12590 (2019–2021). A part of the field survey of this research was also supported by the Special Research Program Fund of Waseda University 2017 (2017K-056). I am most grateful to these funds for supporting this research.

(2) Hereafter, I refer “Southeast Asian states” mainly for indicating geographical and ecological location. On the other hand, I use ASEAN to mention the political and economic relationships among Southeast Asian states, since ASEAN is a regional sociopolitical- and socioeconomic organization to which Southeast countries are approved to join through the treaty (Cremona, et al. 2015; Inama and Sim 2015; Villacorta 2014).

(3) I use “brand” to refer to an imaged commodity that has a certain quality and so is well known among consumers. Establishing a brand is the most important strategy in the competitive market economy (Miller 1997). People of the Lao PDR are making strenuous efforts to put their own brand name in any field in the world market economy (e.g., Amakawa 2004; Amakawa and Yamada 2005; Department of Tourism Management, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism 2012).

(4) Actually the Lao PDR acquired membership in 1997.

(5) In order to promote tourism brand, the government of the Lao PDR make a great effort to promote an image to the world tourist market. One of the images is expressed well in a phrase, “Laos, Simply Beautiful.”

References


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http://aseantourism.travel/content/asta