

## SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AT THE HISTORICAL HERITAGE SITES OF AYUTTHAYA

Akhilesh Trivedi<sup>1,\*</sup> and Saratchaporn Areekul<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study sustainable management at the historical heritage sites of Ayutthaya, a listed world heritage site, covering the three aspects of economic, social, and environmental. In-depth interviews were conducted to observe the situation of sustainability at the historical sites within Ayutthaya. Structured questionnaires were used as a research tool. The research results revealed that most of the major guidelines of sustainability have already been implemented at the historical site. There are however certain areas which still need to meet the requirements of a sustainable management approach such as for economic issues, the participation of local people in employment; for environmental issues, the increasing air and sound pollution, and traffic congestion; and for social issues, celebrating social events and festivals to maintain cultural values.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Management, Heritage Management, Historical Sites of Ayutthaya

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has predicted continuing growth of the industry, with the tourism industry generating 10.4 percent (US\$8.8 Trillion) of world GDP in 2018 (WTTC, 2019). World Heritage sites attract tourists, and tourism is the world's biggest and fastest growing industry (Pedersen, 2002). Therefore, tourism is an increasingly important factor in the planning and management of UNESCO World Heritage sites. The increasing number of travelers at the heritage destinations in Asia requires measures to be made toward the preservation and conservation of the sites. The International

Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Thailand and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) seek to deliver a fully connected approach towards considering nature and culture in their practices and their institutional cultures to provide advice in order to achieve better conservation and sustainable outcomes which reflect the perspectives, interests, and rights, of custodians and local communities (ICOMOS, 2016).

Thailand is rightly renowned for its rich cultural heritage, crafted over 700 years. A number of cultural heritage sites around the country provide evidence of human settlement during the Neolithic age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. These have now become museums,

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<sup>1,\*</sup>Asst. Prof. Dr Akhilesh Trivedi obtains a Ph.D. in (MPA) from University of Lucknow, India. Currently, he is working as a lecturer in the Department of International Business Administration, Faculty of International Hospitality Industry, Dusit Thani College, Bangkok, Thailand. Email: akhileshtdi25@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Miss Saratchaporn Areekul obtains a master's degree in (MBA) from Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand. Currently she is working as a lecturer in the Department of Business Administration, Dusit Thani College, Bangkok, Thailand.

temples, archaeological sites, historical buildings or cities, and world heritage sites. In addition to cultural and historical sites, Thai food, dance performances, arts and crafts, and indeed the laid-back art of living are aspects of the culture which tourists come to experience (Mekong Responsible Tourism, 2016). The ancient city of Ayutthaya was founded in the 14th century but fell under the rule of the Burmese in 1569. Many artistic and valuable objects were lost during that time. In 1969, there was a renovation and preservation of the ruins at the ancient city. Eventually, it was declared as a national historical park in 1976 and was declared one of Thailand's UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1991 (UNESCO, 2019).

The World Heritage emblem symbolizes the interdependence of the world's natural and cultural diversity (Pedersen, 2002). Moreover, culture as the basis of society is one of the four pillars of sustainable development (James, 2014). Sustainable tourism has a positive impact on the local community as well as on travelers. Heritage tourism can also promote cultural values and economic activities by supporting local products and other local businesses or by offering alternative economic activities such as direct and indirect tourism related businesses. Nevertheless, tourism creates well-known problems too. The heritage sites have less economic resources. As such, there is a growing concern that tourism can stretch scarce resources and take managers away from genuine conservation and preservation. Additionally, managing rapid tourism growth is a time-consuming process seeking clear policies and better coordination among the stakeholders, as well as continuous monitoring and evaluation of the performance of management practices. Thus, it is interesting to conduct research to develop guidelines for sustainable management at the heritage sites.

Heritage tourism can contribute to the protection and conservation of the heritage sites, finding the right balance between

economic advantages and the undesirable negative impacts on the local community, culture, and environment.

**Research Problem:** The problem is the gap between sustainable management of heritage sites and the implementation of sustainable management at the Ayutthaya world heritage sites.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this research are:

1. To study the present sustainable management practices and the local administration taking place at the heritage sites of Ayutthaya
2. To explore the sustainable management practices and local administration at the heritage sites of Ayutthaya
3. To develop guidelines for optimum sustainable management at the heritage sites of Ayutthaya

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Sustainability Concept and Tourism

The concept of sustainability first appeared at the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland, 1987). The commission reported the idea of sustainable development by noting that economic growth and environmental conservation are not only compatible, but they are necessary partners. Sustainable development is highly significant for the local community to generate extra income, maintain social and cultural values, and balance ecological activity and physical constraints (Bhuiyan et al., 2012). "*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (Brundtland, 1987, 45-65). It consists of two key concepts of the International Institute of Sustainable Development, 2012, the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority

should be given; and the idea of limitations, imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet the present and future needs of the people. Later, Van der Merwe & Van der Merwe (1999) added that sustainable development is a program for changing the process of economic development so that it ensures a basic quality of life for all people and at the same time protects the ecosystems and community systems which make life possible and worthwhile. According to Hall (2008), sustainable development and tourism present change, referring to the movement from one state or condition to another. Later, WTO defined sustainable tourism development as meeting the needs of present tourists and local regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to heritage management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, environmental, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled. This leads to maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems. Sustainable tourism products are products which are operated in harmony with the local environment, community, and cultures so that these become the beneficiaries not the victims of tourism development (World Tourism Organization, 1998). Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues, and promoting sustainable tourism practices among them (World Tourism Organization, 2001). Medina (2005) stated that one criterion for sustainable tourism should be to include indicators of social and economic sustainability, adding indicators of environmental sustainability. Moreover, Wall (1997) argued that for tourism to contribute to sustainable development, it must be economically viable, environmentally sensitive, and culturally appropriate. There are several different notions, with some authors focusing on the protection of the natural,

cultural, and architectural heritage (Collins, 1999; Lim & McAleer, 2003). The phenomenon of the growing population must be realized to determine a realistic tourism load capacity (Ayala, 1995; Lim & McAleer, 2003). Additionally, localized economic activities should not be ignored as they can contribute to sustainable development in terms of increased happiness and a peaceful balance. Moreover, apart from economic growth, long-term effectiveness, efficiency, and competitiveness are affected (Tóth, 2009, 2013).

## 2.2 Cultural Heritage

The sustainable management of cultural heritage consists of at least two important dimensions: the longevity and viability of economic, environmental, and social aspects. Thus, in the first instance, the physical aspects of cultural heritage are valued. Their continued existence in good condition represents a form of sustainability of heritage management. This longevity of cultural heritage can play an important role in building an attractive, confident, or bold image of countries, both inside and outside their own boundaries, for investors, tourists, or their own population. Secondly, no management of cultural heritage is sustainable unless it is economically, environmentally, and socially viable (UNESCO, 2016). The Venice Charter in 1964 could be a crucial milestone of cultural heritage conservation. The aim of this charter was to address the common responsibility to safeguard cultural heritage for future generations in 'the full richness of their authenticity'.

## 2.3 Sustainable Management of Heritage Sites: Ayutthaya Historical Park and Sustainable Management

The Historic City of Ayutthaya and its Associated Historic Towns was announced by UNESCO in 1991, along with Historic Town of Sukhothai and its Associated Historic Towns.

Ayutthaya became the second Siamese capital after Sukhothai. It was destroyed by the Burmese in the 18th century. Its remains, characterized by the prang (reliquary towers), and gigantic monasteries, give an idea of its past splendor (UNESCO, 2005). The new authority for the site was named the Fine Arts Department (FAD) in 1911. Since then, the FAD became the sole authority in cultural heritage conservation work, responsible for the declaration, registration, safeguarding, restoration work, and daily maintenance. A turning point of conservation in Thailand could be the launch of the second Ancient Sites and Objects, Artistic Objects and National Museum Act, 1961 (amended in 1992), so called the 'Monument Act'. It defines 'ancient monument' as "an immovable property which, by its age or architectural characteristics or historical evidence, is useful in the field of art, history or archaeology and shall include places which are archaeological sites, historic sites and historic parks" (Article 4, 1961). Since 1992, there has been a new measure for protecting the physical environment of a historic property, the 'Enhancement & Conservation of National Environment Quality Act' (Office of Environmental and Natural Resource Plan and Policy, 2005). The Ayutthaya school of art showcases the ingenuity and the creativity of the Ayutthaya civilization as well as its ability to assimilate a multitude of foreign influences. The large palaces and the Buddhist monasteries constructed in the capital, for example at Wat Mahathat and Wat Phra Si Sanphet, are testimony to both the economic vitality and technological prowess of their builders, as well as to the appeal of the intellectual tradition they embodied. All buildings were elegantly decorated with the highest quality of crafts and mural paintings, which consisted of an eclectic mixture of traditional styles surviving from Sukhothai, inherited from Angkor, and borrowed from the 17th and 18th century art styles of Japan, China, India, Persia, and Europe. These buildings also create a rich and

unique expression of a cosmopolitan culture and lay the foundation for the fusion of styles of art and architecture popular throughout the succeeding Rattanakosin Era and onwards (Ayutthaya Historical Park, 2017). The Historic City of Ayutthaya is a cultural site that is recognized in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Thailand. It was added to the list in 1991 citing its role in shaping the history and culture of Thailand. The old city of Ayutthaya spans about 400 years in history. The religious monuments and temples within the Historic City of Ayutthaya exemplify the grandeur and power of this once-flourishing kingdom. It was a showcase of the wealth of the Kings at that time. The Ayutthaya Historical Park is the main attraction within the UNESCO site of the Historic City of Ayutthaya. This park was established to preserve the ruins of the old city of Ayutthaya. Artistic objects and elements from the temples and other structures in the city were lost and destroyed when the Burmese took control, even though they were not pillaged in the process. Two centuries later, in 1969, renovation and reconstruction were conducted at the old city of Ayutthaya (particularly within the area now covered within the Ayutthaya Historical Park). Since it was named a historical park in 1976, efforts for its conservation grew more serious and intense. Once an important center of global diplomacy and commerce, Ayutthaya is now an archaeological ruin, characterized by the remains of tall prang (reliquary towers) and Buddhist monasteries of monumental proportions, which give an idea of the city's past size and the splendor of its architecture (Ayutthaya Historical Park, 2017).

There are numerous temples within the historical park but some of the most notable ones include the Wat Mahathat, a Buddhist temple that belongs within the Ayutthaya Historical Park. According to researchers, this temple was constructed in 1374 by King Borommara I. The Wat Phra Sri Sanphet is considered as the holiest temple within the site

of the old Royal Palace in Ayutthaya. The temple is considered as the grandest and most beautiful of all temples within the old city. The Wat Ratchaburana is another Buddhist temple located within Ayutthaya and was founded in 1424. The main prang of the temple is considered as one of the best in Ayutthaya. The Wat Thammikarat is one of the most recognizable temples within the ruins at the Historic City of Ayutthaya. The most distinctive feature of this temple is the central chedi, surrounded by sculptures of guardian lions (Historic City of Ayutthaya, 2018). The Ayutthaya Kings had three Royal palaces built on the island. The Grand Palace or Wang Luang was the King's residence. Presently, a replica of the palace can be seen in the Ayutthaya Historical Study Center. Wang Luang is located close to the Northern city wall, North East of the Wat Phra Si Sanphet. The Chandra Kasem Palace or Wang Na, also known as the Front Palace was built in 1577 as the Royal residence for the crown prince. It is located on Uthong road on the North East tip of the island. The palace consists of a group of buildings, some in traditional Thai style and some in European style. Today the palace is in use as a museum displaying artifacts from the Ayutthaya period. The Rear Palace or Wang Lang was built by King Maha Thammarachathirat as the Royal residence for one of his sons. The palace is found on the South West section of the island, West of Khlong Tho road. The park is located on an island surrounded by the Chao Phraya, Pa Sak, and Lopburi rivers in the town of Ayutthaya (Ayutthaya Historical Park, 2019).

Since the Tourist Authority of Thailand (TAT) is responsible for public relations and marketing for Ayutthaya province, the main policy in managing sustainability at the Heritage sites of Ayutthaya has focused on economics. The Fine Arts Department, an official unit which is under the office of the Ayutthaya Historical Park, is responsible for the old buildings of the heritage sites and

controls the number of tourists in this province. This includes everything in the heritage area: trees, water supply, electricity, and other public facilities. There are other important ancient monuments, some of which are outside of the presently inscribed area under the same protection and conservation management afforded to the current World heritage property. In 1991, Ayutthaya Historical Park was declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site under criteria III as an excellent witness to the period of development of true national Thai art. The central and southwestern parts of Ayutthaya Island are a historical site under UNESCO protection. The sites include Wat Ratchaburana, Wat Mahathat, Wat Phra Sri Sanphet, Wat Phra Ram, and Wiharn Phra Mongkhon Bopit. The sites that are not part of World Heritage site are the sites beyond Ayutthaya Island, for example, Wat Yai Chai Mongkon, Wat Phanan Choeng, Wat Chaiwatthanaram, and Wat Phu Khao Thong (Ayutthaya Historical Park, 2017). A reviewing of literature on the topic concluded that the importance of sustainable destination management focuses on economic, social, and environmental issues at the heritage sites. Presently, there are several environmental issues that require strong support from the public and private sectors in order to be solved; these include traffic jams, air-pollution, sound pollution, and natural disasters, among others. Therefore, investigating Ayutthaya Historical Sites to find a solution for these issues is of interest.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach. There are many heritage sites in Ayutthaya and every heritage site has its own management office. Therefore, the population of study in this research consisted of the staff and management teams of the Ayutthaya heritage sites and the tourism government agencies, which is of unknown

size. Therefore, a non-probability sampling, convenience sampling, was used in the collection of data from the respondents. According to the theoretical saturation, a proper sample size generally occurs between 10 and 30 interviews (Marshall et. al. 2013). Thus, 20 respondents were interviewed at the sites of Ayutthaya. The research employed in depth-interviews and structured questionnaires for gathering primary data. The questionnaire covered three aspects of sustainable management at Ayutthaya heritage destinations; these were economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects. Content analysis was used to analyze the results of these in-depth interviews.

#### **4. RESEARCH RESULTS**

The objective of this study was to develop guidelines for sustainable management practices in the context of economic, social, and environmental aspects, at the historical heritage site of Ayutthaya. The research results were as follows:

##### **4.1 Economic Aspects on Sustainable Management of Ayutthaya Historical Park**

###### **4.1.1 Economic Activities and Community Businesses**

The majority of respondents agreed that the historical sites of Ayutthaya have accelerated new business activities e.g. accommodation, travel agencies, guides, restaurants, super markets, transport, etc. However, some respondents were very enthusiastic about the promotion of the area due to the TV series “Love Destiny”, as the area has become popular as the filming destination of the series. There has been a corresponding positive impact on tourism. Domestic tourism is booming as people from around the country desire to visit the historical sites after watching “Love Destiny”. Respondents mentioned that every weekend the Ayutthaya historical sites

are overcrowded. Domestic travelers come to visit in groups, hiring “Love Destiny” series actor’s dresses and making photos.

###### **4.1.2 The Unique Character and Identity of The Historic Sites**

Many respondents explained several types of souvenir items and OTOP products that represent the unique character of the historical sites. There are many local products such as ‘roti sai mai’, which are a signature of historical heritage sites. However, some respondents have informed that local wooden and bamboo products also enhance economic activities, generating employability in the historical city. All the respondents appreciated the efforts of authorities who organized many activities for the local communities. These activities represent the unique character of the local communities of heritage sites. The local people have opportunities to sell their local products and these also identify the community uniqueness, as do the roti sai mai, bamboo fan, palm leaf fish mobile, palm leaf hat, artificial flowers from Sesbania, curved stone-ceramics, and farmer’s central market.

###### **4.1.3 Manage and Facilitate Accessibility at The Heritage Sites**

There are some different views on this question. However, all the respondents agreed that the private and public partnership model is appropriate for management of accessibility and this increases the facilities for visitors. Some respondents mentioned that there is a need for more facilities, such as sunshades for tourists, rain shades for tourists, more public toilets, supermarkets, and local food restaurants. Some respondents mentioned that although the road, the rail and the water transport is available from Bangkok to Ayutthaya, there is still a need for direct BTS and MRT links between Bangkok and Ayutthaya. Furthermore, sometimes the internet also has poor signal. There is an area for local product and souvenir shops near the

historical heritage sites, but also an absence of a particular market for tourists provided by the government near the historical park.

#### **4.1.4 Employment Opportunities**

All respondents agreed that the historical heritage sites have a sustainable growth of tourists, including both international and national tourist visits. This creates many direct and indirect jobs for the local community. Likewise, it leads to the opening of new home stays, hostels, hotels, and guest houses, as well as restaurants, souvenir shops, OTOP shops, local product shops, transport related jobs, tourist guides, and travel agencies as well as other tourism related businesses. However, some of the respondents had concerns about well skilled and financially strong people from Bangkok taking the employment opportunities in Ayutthaya.

#### **4.1.5 Facilitating Community Based Activities**

All respondents agreed that there are community centers, play grounds, social activity centers, meeting halls, and convention centers. Regarding convenience stores for daily use goods near the heritage sites, the majority of respondents admit that there are some supermarkets e.g. seven-eleven, family marts, and grocery shops near the Heritage sites. Nevertheless, sustainable growth of domestic and international tourists in Ayutthaya requires more convenience stores for meeting the demand of the growing tourist market. Furthermore, some respondents mentioned that near the historical sites there is a necessity for a daily market or “Talad Nut” for the local community. The “Talad Nut” will help the people of the local community to have new employment opportunities, while the market will also help to generate more economic activities at the historical sites.

## **4.2. Social Aspects on the Sustainable Management of Ayutthaya Historical Park**

### **4.2.1 Management and Preservation of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage Items**

Managing and preserving the historical heritage sites in their original shape for future generations is a significant challenge for the local administration. Most respondents mentioned that conserving and maintaining sites is a long and complex process, due to the status of the Ayutthaya Historical site as an UNESCO world heritage site. Some of the respondents mentioned that a financial plan and maintenance plan must be submitted for approval at the Archeology Department of Thailand before any type of maintenance can commence at the sites. This also depends on the available government budget.

### **4.2.2 Conserve, Preserve, Restore and Maintain**

Many respondents mentioned that there are very old monuments, including palaces, temples, museums, and some old buildings at the Ayutthaya heritage sites. During a natural disaster the site monuments become damaged e.g. building roofs, walls or boundaries, their color and design. To maintain the damaged parts of the monument, it is required to obtain permission from the concerned department of the government. As Ayutthaya is a big city, it is therefore difficult to identify ruins. The office staff periodically inspect to identify areas for maintenance, create a project plan, and send a proposal to the government for approval. However, regarding the preservation and conservation of the historical heritage sites, the government joins hands with the private sector to maintain these historical sites for continued authenticity.

#### **4.2.3 Regulate New Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in The World Heritage Sites**

As Ayutthaya is a very old city and capital, many old buildings and houses have been identified as heritage sites. Only a few respondents replied to this question. There are many old buildings, temples, and other buildings identified by the archeological department of Thailand and added as heritage sites. Some respondents mentioned that there are many buildings waiting to receive their status as heritage sites.

#### **4.2.4 Managing Old, Neglected Building Sites**

After the adoption of old monuments, the concerned agencies must examine the buildings and do alterations under the permission of the archeological department. Furthermore, respondents mentioned that the maintenance or repair works of the heritage sites must be approved by the Director General of the Fine Arts Department. The process of the documentation for maintenance is carried out by the private owner. The maintenance of heritage sites requires a high quality of material and equipment to maintain originality of the new adapted monuments.

#### **4.2.5 Managing Accessibility of historic buildings for handicapped people**

The majority of respondents agreed that there is lack of proper infrastructure for physically disabled people to access the historical sites and temples. As the length of the stair is long, therefore aged tourists and handicapped people have problems in accessing the historical sites and the temples.

#### **4.2.6 Managing Innovative Renovation Techniques and Updating Outdated Infrastructure**

Some respondents replied that the maintenance of the heritage sites is done by the Fine Arts Department according to the

guidelines of world heritage conservation and preservation. As the sites must be maintained for the long term, while remaining in their original form, maintenance agencies must adopt innovative and modern techniques under the supervision of highly skilled professionals. The materials that are used for maintenance are also very expensive. A periodic survey by the concerning agencies at the world heritage sites makes a report for the repair and maintenance of the heritage sites.

#### **4.2.7 Social and Cultural Activities and Facilities**

All respondents agreed that there is also a lighting program arranged by the local authorities at night for tourists to continue to experience the beauty of the world heritage sites at nighttime. There is a rareness of facilities for handicapped tourists at the sites. Wat Chaiwattanaram provides sidewalks for handicapped tourists. Some respondents mentioned that the department of fine arts under the Ministry of culture proposed to build sidewalks for handicapped tourists at all the temples. Moreover, there is a lack of slopes for handicapped people to access the inside of temples and other historical sites. In addition, some fruit festivals and local folk dances are made on the sites. All respondents agreed that local administration and communities organize local and national festivals for awareness of cultural heritage values. The purpose of organizing these festivals is to attract more national and international tourists, as well as to involve children in the rituals and traditions of the community to carry forward for new generations. There are some very popular festivals, such as cycling, elephant back activities, craft festivals, Songkran festival, Wai Kru Bucha, the Tao ceremony, Bang Sai arts, a Crafts Centre fair, Bang Sai Loy Krathong, traditional Long boat races, and the Ayutthaya World Heritage fair.

### **4.3 Environmental Aspects on the Sustainable Management of Ayutthaya Historical Park**

#### **4.3.1 Cleanliness and Security at The Heritage Buildings, Temples and Sites**

All respondents mentioned that the cleanliness of the heritage sites is being taken care of by the local authorities. There are some temples where cleanliness is also taken care of by the temple administration. The respondents also mentioned that the security of the heritage sites is taken care of by the local authority. The local administration also facilitates waste management.

#### **4.3.2 Preventive Measures for Natural Disasters**

Most the respondents had a lack of knowledge regarding this question. However, some respondents informed that there is a disaster management department responsible for natural disasters; these include floods, storms, and earthquakes. This department has taken some preventive steps to protect the sites from natural disasters. During a natural disaster, the government always joins hands with the private sector to conserve and protect the heritage sites. Some respondents mentioned that the temples near the road are affected by vibration of the temple building due to their old age, and caused by passing traffic. Whenever big trucks and buses pass near the temples the walls of the temples vibrate.

#### **4.3.3 Environmental Management e.g. Air Pollution, Energy Efficiency**

All respondents agreed that there is air pollution caused by vehicles, such as cars, buses, and boats used in transportation for access to the destination. Besides that, farmers' burning the waste from rice crops also causes air pollution. Moreover, there were many tourists smoking in the public area of the sites due to a lack of designated areas for smoking at the heritage sites. Additionally, traffic

congestion also happens in the tourist high season in Ayutthaya. The traffic department is trying to manage it, but there is still heavy traffic congestion every weekend near the parking area of the heritage sites. There are also insufficient preventive measures taken by local authorities to save energy at the historical heritage sites. However, there is a proper electricity supply across the entire historical heritage area including the temples, but a shortcoming of electric saving equipment at the sites to save energy. There are some permanent staff taking care of energy saving equipment. The green area of the historical heritage park is taken care of by appointed staff at the sites, with responsibilities to trim the grass, trees, and water plants, as well as to protect the sites from weather.

#### **4.3.4 Special Climate Condition Facilities; Weather (Hot & Rainy) and Drainage System**

All respondents informed that there is no shade for rainy and hot seasons to protect the sites from the rain, or the sunlight in summer. Obviously, tourists must carry their own umbrellas. Moreover, during heavy rain, the rainwater causes flooding around the city and tourists must walk in the rainwater. Furthermore, they mentioned that though the drainage system is perfectly working during normal situations, long and heavy rain always causes floods in the city.

### **5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Heritage Sites of Ayutthaya are a popular destination for local tourists as well as foreign tourists. Therefore, the numbers of visitors are increasing year by year. Maintaining the authenticity of historical monuments is a big challenge for the local administration of Ayutthaya. According to the respondents' comments on sustainable management at the historical sites, there are

already many sustainable management practices implemented at the heritage sites, but effort is still required to improve such management. Regarding the economic aspects, there are many policies and programs arranged by the government for the local community to enhance their income. The local people must participate more in the decision-making process. This agrees with Van der Merwe & Van der Merwe (1999), who stated that sustainable development is a program for changing the process of economic development so that it ensures a basic quality of life for all people and at the same time protects the ecosystems and community systems that make life possible and worthwhile. Therefore, the guidelines of sustainable management for the heritage sites of Ayutthaya have been developed as follows:

Firstly, the increasing economic activities at the heritage sites have created new jobs and new employment opportunities for the local people. As some interviewees mentioned, there has been more organization of economic activities e.g. tourism fairs, TV series, and the events of some government agencies, and sports events, to accelerate economic activities and increase the flow of visitors to the historical sites. However, it is also necessary to establish supermarkets and grocery shops at the historical site.

Secondly, regarding the socio-cultural aspects, a very important issue is for the local community to protect their culture and values from the diversity of visitors. Therefore, the native festivals and social events should be celebrated to protect the local customs. Increasing the number of traditional social functions helps the local community to maintain their cultural heritage values.

Thirdly, regarding environmental issues, the historical heritage sites should be converted into 'walking street' areas to protect from air pollution, traffic congestion, and building vibrations. Moreover, parking areas should be shifted to the outskirts of the city, in order to

improve air quality. Technical experts as well as energy saving equipment are required in order to save energy. Finally, for sustainable management, the heritage sites can be periodically promoted using digital platforms, organizing social, business, and political activities, events, conferences, and exhibitions at the historical sites.

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