



Significance and roles of the public and private sectors and the community in the touristy process of war relics

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Abstract

Purpose - This paper argues for the significance and role of the public sector, private sector, and local communities in the tourism development process of war relics.

Methodology/Design/Approach - The approach is conceptual and argumentative, focusing on the analysis of stakeholder roles and the interrelationships required to support sustainable and meaningful tourism centered on war relics.

Findings - The study finds that the public sector needs to take the lead in establishing a long-term vision for regional development. The private sector plays a key role in providing funding diversity and improving service quality. In addition, local community participation is essential for building consensus on the interpretation of war relics and for coordinating stakeholder efforts in a balanced and effective way.

Originality/Value - This paper offers an integrated perspective that emphasizes the importance of aligning public leadership, private sector engagement, and community consensus in the development of war-related tourism, with a focus on peace-building and sustainable regional progress.

Keywords: War relics, Sustainable tourism, Community participation, Public-private partnership, War relics, Community participation, Public-private partnership

While the physical relics of war still affects many communities, values have changed over the years since the war and unmaintained structures have fallen into disrepair, making it imperative to review the future of the remaining war relics (Larkham & Adams, 2022). War relics are indispensable to understand historical facts properly, and are often designated as cultural assets that contribute to the development of regional culture, and has the nature of public assets in its historical and cultural value. For example, more than 60% of war relics have been managed under the initiative of local governments in Japan (Kanda & Kuroda, 2022). This paper argues that the management of war relics as public assets leads to public interests for communities, and discusses the significance and role of public sector, private sector, and communities in the touristy process of war relics. In the case of the partnership for sustainable touristy process of the war relics in Cowra, Australia, it was revealed that the following three elements are important, which includes 1) Formulation of a positive and clear vision by local authorities, 2) Consensus building among the local communities, and 3) Cooperation from the private sector (Ishii, 2023). The role of local authorities in the management of war relics as public assets is vital. The authorities need to take the lead in developing a vision and long-term plan for the future of the regional area, incorporating local intentions regarding war relics.

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However, when planning and management are carried out solely by the public authorities, it is largely financed by public funds. Long-term projects including the management of war relics can lead to financing difficulties. Mekonnen et al. (2022) claimed that lack of funding and stakeholder involvement as among the major factors affecting management for cultural public assets. Gould (2020) also indicated that the role of governments in the public assets management has been diminishing in much of the world, even as the drivers of demand is high. The matter of who should pay for public assets management, and how that financing should be generated, is a matter of practical concern within the discipline.

Additionally, there is also a perception that government services do not include sufficient capacity to serve fully the needs of the public assets management. According to Wiseman & Choudhury (2020), along with customer experience survey, which found that 80% of public sector fell into the negative category in the customer experience, compared to just 20% of private sector. Given this perspective, in the case of the development for tourism destination based on public assets, relying solely on governmental methodology could result in services not being customer-focused, and the quality of the tourism business could be deteriorated.

On the other hand, the role of the private sector in tourism for war relics is crucial to ensure diversity in funding and to manage quality of service, excessive commercialization is also a concern. Braithwaite & Leiper (2010) and Arrunnapaporn (2012, 2011) criticized the excessive commercialization and commodification of war relics in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, which has become popular by the film "The Bridge on the River Kwai". For tourists, the experience of travelling to "Kanchanaburi" includes a strong entertainment element, and that excessive commercialization and commodification has diminished the value of the war relics as a heritage of negative history during World War II and has obscured its authenticity. In this process of offering war relics for tourism consumption, some aspects of the relics only tend to be commodified to meet visitors' needs, and it could separate the relic itself from the local communities regardless of their interests.

Alshboul (2016) claimed that "Sustainable tourism" requires a greater role for local communities to engage in its planning, development, and management. The ultimate goal of community engagement in tourism should be to strive for sustainable practices based on the balance of needs and interests of local communities in a long-term perspective. Anson (1999) indicated that the significant points for tourism planning in the aftermath of war include an acknowledgment of importance of the community participation in the peacebuilding process and the local consensus in the interpretation of the war relics that have been related to the past tragic event.

In conclusion, in the case of the tourism based on the war relics, it should be precious to look quietly at the tragedy of war in the region, digest it emotionally and rationally, and create tourism programs and attractions from that context, rather than creating something new and completely divorced from the view of communities. While recognizing the value of community participation in the peace-building process, it should be also crucial to build local consensus on the interpretation of war relics that vividly show the story of war and to coordinate public and private involvement to develop optimal and balanced relationships between public and private sector for the future progress with this local consensus as a groundwork.

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Availability of data and materials

The data presented in this study may be obtained on request from the corresponding author.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work the author used Grammarly in order to correct spelling mistakes and help me make better sentences. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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