

# PROTECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM: THE CASE OF LIJIANG, CHINA

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## Abstract

Under the rapid development of tourism, what most attracts tourists are the abundant, particular and various cultural heritages, which have the great potential to provide tourist destinations with everlasting charm and appeal. However, tourism is regarded as a double edged sword, and this includes cultural heritage tourism as well. In the process of tourism development at cultural heritage sites, while economic growth and social development have been gained, it seems that some social pressure and environmental problems could not be avoided, such as the danger of characteristic loss, great pressure from crowds of tourists as well as reluctant migration of local residents. Consequently, it becomes increasingly urgent to find a better way to protect these cultural heritages within this fast development of cultural heritage tourism. Moreover, especially in multicultural contexts, people have been paying more attention to these negative impacts from tourism on society, culture, tourist destination and local residents. Under this background, in order to study the protective development of cultural heritage tourism, this research chooses Lijiang in China as a study case, as the Old Town of Lijiang is one of World Cultural Heritage sites with great worldwide fame.

**Keywords:** protective development, cultural heritage tourism, multicultural context, Lijiang.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is well known that cultural heritage tourism (CHT) is the biggest attraction for international tourists, which in turn is a major source of foreign income exchange. However, akin to a coin that has two sides, CHT is indeed a contradictory entity. As tourism is much like a double-edged sword, especially in terms of sustaining cultural heritage (Popescu & Corbos, 2010), CHT causes consequentially negative effects in the course of development much like a looming overcast shadow that never leaves, even though economic profits are increasingly obtained (Falade and Aribigbola, 2010). For example, during tourism

development in many cultural heritage sites, when rapid economic growth and great social development have been gained, some social pressure and environmental problems follow. In some destinations, the local distinguished features are in danger of disappearing and severe impacts to the local community and residents have also become increasingly apparent with due to the presence of tourist crowds. The unethical actions of some operators not only permit but encourage inappropriate use and exploitation of cultural assets and lead to the destruction of the assets and create conflict with the local custodians or tradition bearers.

Mattix (1999) was of the view that cultural heritage is one of the factors depredating heritage sites as well as contributing to environmental pollution, natural deterioration as well as other negative effects, which is the reason why it has increasingly become a dominant issue in terms of favorably developing CHT in the field of tourism. In many cases, the coveted designation of World Cultural Heritage sites is just regarded as a way of acquiring international financial support and as an ideal tool for marketing and promotional purposes (Timothy, 2009). As such, the question of how to develop CHT while protecting these vital cultural aspects, especially within the multicultural context has great practical significance in tourism development.

## 2. CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Cultural heritage was first addressed in international law in 1907 as an independent term, but was not brought into the tourism industry arena until 1967. In that year, UNCTAD agreed on the commercialization aspect of cultural heritage and the UNESCO released the report on Cultural Factors in Tourism. CHT is a special tourism product with reference to traditions, festivals, industries and places with strong diversity and territoriality, including irreplaceable historic elements along with cultural and natural resources, such as built structure and surroundings, cultural landscapes, ruins and archaeological sites, historical communities and sites, museums, performing arts and other similar aspects (NTHP, 2005). Keitumetse (2009) believes that CHT is mainly constituted with the components of cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, museums and others) and cultural experiences (festivals, communities and so on). So it is not difficult to understand that CHT has been gradually regarded as one of the most effective ways to stimulate national patriotism for domestic tourists and enhance the understanding for overseas tourists (Lu, 2006).

Cultural heritage resources are also playing an unparalleled role in tourism development due to their several distinct characteristics (Puczko and Ratz, 2007). It has been viewed as a basis to increase tourism attractiveness and cultural supply offered by local communities (OECD, 2009). The main

products of CHT are heritage art galleries, cultural centers, heritage theme parks, heritage trails and so on (DuCros, 2001). Cultural heritage tourism largely based on heritage, shares 40% of total tourism income globally and is growing at about 15% annually, triple the growth of general tourism (Maunder, 2011). As an example, in 2010, 940 million tourists travelled to a different country, coming into direct contact with tangible; art, monuments and intangible; music, food, traditions and culture (UNWTO, 2011).

Some scholars also argue that the positive effect of CHT is highly exaggerated and the contradiction between cultural heritage and tourism is irreconcilable in nature (Berry, 1994; Jacobs and Gale, 1994; Boniface, 1998; Jansen-Verbeke, 1998). Cultural heritage managers view heritages as having intrinsic merit, but a tourism developer would look to them as raw materials for tourism products (McKercher and DuCros, 2002). The inherent incompatibility is identified as the main root of the increasing crisis in the development process of CHT. In order to satisfy tourists, cultural heritage resources, such as local cultures and social customs are often over commercialized. Machlis and Burch (1983) believe the falsification of histories, in-authenticity and homogeneity are the inevitable outcome of cultural heritage commercialization derived from 'the different priorities of tourism as an industry and heritage as a conservation policy'. Thus, the most appropriate way to develop CHT for sustainability has become as one of the main research issues within tourism based research (DuCros, 2001).

### 3. PROTECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

In the long run, the neglect of protection will result in the degradation of CHT and the decrease of tourism attraction (Iyer and Siegel, 1988). Only if these precious heritages are conserved perfectly during the tourism development, the aim of a sustainable CHT could be achieved. From this view, strict laws, fines and jail sentences, education and financial support are regarded as effective measures in safeguarding CHT (Lazarus, 1999).

#### **Laws**

Legal systems of protecting cultural heritage can be classified into four types: international agreements, national laws, local acts and entity regulations. On the international level, international protection treaties have been developed by UNESCO and other intergovernmental organizations since the 1950s. Many UNESCO conference constitutions form the main body of international laws to protect cultural heritages. The Hague Convention, held by UNESCO in 1954 is the first form of official texts established in response to the destruction of cultural heritage following the limiting scope of protecting cultural heritages during the World War II.

Further UNESCO conferences have different themes, including the principles and methods of protection (1956), preserving cultural property endangered by public or private works (1968), prohibition and prevention of trafficking in cultural property (1970) and the protection of world cultural and natural heritage (1972). The concerns on the protection of cultural heritage from UNESCO have continued on into the present. Other international organizations have also paid more attention to this issue, as evident by the UNCTAD (1967) and UNIDROIT (1995). At the national level, almost every government has put cultural heritage protection as an important responsibility. The basic framework of national laws is then classified into private ownership and national ownership as a downstream process to incorporate these regulations within the local context (Mattix, 1999).

### ***Education***

The inherent properties of CHT should be understood and upheld by all the stakeholders of CHT (McKercher and DuCros, 2002). At the local level, all types of education to protect cultural heritage deserve an in-depth studying. Lazarus (1999) deems that local museums and sites easily open and accessible to the public with enough consultants or guides as well as guests. In Italy, top museums are open at night in order to adapt to the faster rhythm of modern life, which aims mainly to attract young people (Harris, 1999). Bawa (1999) argues that youth involvement in cultural heritage is important in enhancing knowledge, increasing aesthetics, understanding monuments, learning conservation techniques and enhancing pride of their own heritage.

### ***Finance***

Public funding for protecting cultural heritage is in short supply in the developed world and is even scarcer in developing countries, which is the most glaring problem related to heritage protection (Timothy, 2009). To relieve this financial strain, monetary support for CHT, besides state funding, should be sought from various sources, mainly including cultural entrepreneurs, the public, spin-off and supplementary sources, cultural festivals, private sector, supporting affiliates and the like. Under the integrated consideration of education and finance, Lazarus (1999) advises that students should participate in the protection process within three concrete approaches: adopting one certain heritage by one school, cleaning museums regularly and displaying heritage signs, which will help to lower operating costs of these sites and enhance the students' national pride and patriotism.

#### 4. CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LIJIANG, CHINA

Lijiang is located in the North-West of Yunnan Province, South-West China (Figure 1). The Old Town of Lijiang has been recognized as a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO in 1997. The ancient Lijiang city began to take shape during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 A.D.). Throughout its 800 years of history, Lijiang has been a key transportation junction for the Tibetan - Yi Corridor and the Ancient Southern Silk Road and also an important passageway of the Tea-Horse Ancient Road. Lijiang has become one of the important crossroads for multi-nationality migration, which makes it famous for its outstanding indigenous cultures and its compatibility with the multi-cultures of the world. Currently, about 22 minorities live together in Lijiang such as the Naxi, Yi, Lisu, Miao, Zang, Hui, Zhuang, Bai, Dai and accounted for 58.1% of the population, excluding the majority Han group, as at the end of 2005 (PGOTLC, 2010).

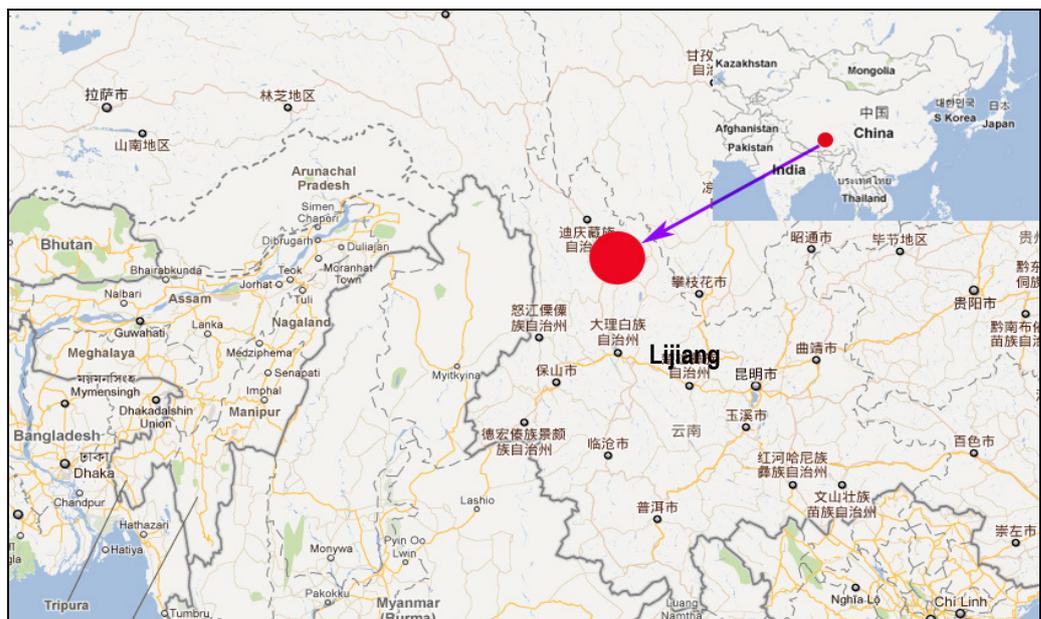


FIGURE 1 - THE LOCATION OF LIJIANG IN YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA

The tourism industry in Lijiang has been developing rapidly with rich cultural resources. At present, ancient traditional music of Naxi and the Dongba culture in Lijiang have been one of most influential tourism brands in the world. The Ancient Naxi Dongba Literature Manuscripts in Lijiang have also been listed in Memory of the World register by UNESCO in 1993. In 2009, Lijiang city received 7.58 million tourists with an annual growth rate of 21.21% and achieved consolidated tourism revenue of 1.4 USD billion with an annual growth rate of 27.49%, accounted for over 50% of the total gross national product of Lijiang (Yuan, 2010). In 2010, the tourist arrivals of Lijiang city soared to 9.09 million, rising by 19.92%, contributed consolidated revenue of 1.76 USD billion with a growth of 26.27% (Guan, 2011).

The development approach of “protecting world heritage as a means to drive tourism and tourism development that encompasses heritage protection” in Lijiang is regarded as a new brand with an effective experience to solve the intractable problem of protecting city-featured cultural heritage in China and even in the world by UNESCO, which is famously known as the “China Experience” within the field of protection and development in tourism destinations. As shown in Table 1, the current situation of CHT in Lijiang can be boiled down into eight perspectives: tourist composition, resource combination, tourism festival, tourism derivatives, tourism marketing, cultural conservation, tourism communication and tourism management.

### 5. ISSUES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LIJIANG, CHINA

Cultural heritage is the most important aspect of CHT. As a common sense would dictate, any development needs a sound structure mainly constituted by subject, media, object and surroundings. Similarly, for cultural heritage, the requisite structures consist of carrier, succession form, reflection as well as authenticity, push power and pull power (Figure 2). Unfortunately, despite of all benefits from tourism development, rapid development of CHT in Lijiang has also brought a lot of pressure and threats to cultural heritage such as dialect, lifestyle, cultural authenticity, urban function, tourism industry management and others, which will be discussed in subsequent sections .

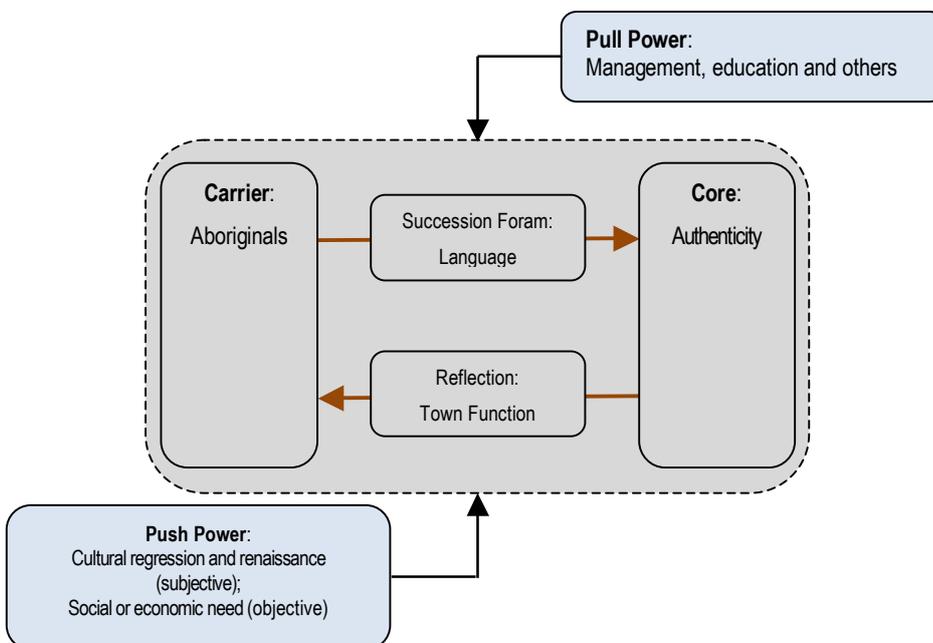


FIGURE 2 - THE STRUCTURE OF SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

TABLE 1 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM IN LIJIANG, CHINA

Perspective	Tourism development in Lijiang
Tourist composition	The number of overseas tourists of Lijiang is 0.53 million in 2009, only accounting for 6.94% of the total international tourists in China. Domestic tourists are undoubtedly the largest tourism market of Lijiang.
Resource combination	Besides CHT resources, there are many famous natural destinations such as the three rivers of the Yunnan protected areas listed as a World Natural Heritage Site in 2003. Yulong Snow Mountain which is the peak with the lowest latitude in the Northern Hemisphere as well as other attractions.
Tourism festival	There are multifarious festivals of different cultures. The Dongba Festival, Sanduo Festival, Dragon King Celebration, Galloping Horse Fair and other cultural performances, such as the Lishui Jin Sha, Naxi ancient traditional music and Lijiang Impression have already become an influential cultural brands in the world tourism market.
Tourism derivatives	Most of the tourism products that tourists can see and buy in Lijiang are handicrafts and native products with rich local culture. However, the prices of these products are higher than their actual values in general.
Tourism marketing	Although only a few publicity and promotional web pages have been established, the number of websites created by tourists is increased. Internet communities have increased gradually. The great brand value of Lijiang has also attracted many other websites to have columns about Lijiang, which is also important for publicity.
Cultural conservation	Over-commercialization of tourism development has resulted in extinction and dissimilation of traditional culture to a certain degree. In July 2007, Lijiang was warned for the damage done to its cultural atmosphere due to commercialization and the migration of its indigenous residents.
Tourist communication	Many tourism network communities related to Lijiang have been established to provide platforms for domestic tourists to exchange tourism experiences and planning their travel strategy. In QQ alone, the most popular internet network in China, there is 290 communities related to the Old Town of Lijiang involving domestic tourists and inn managers.
Tourism management	Heritage supervision in Lijiang is under Lijiang Old Town Protection Administration and Lijiang Old Town Management Limited Liability Company. Non-official organizations such as the Lijiang Culture Research Association and the Yunnan Mosuo Culture Research Centre are responsible for culture research.

### ***Naxi language and Dongba script on the brink of extinction***

The Naxi ethnic group, a branch of the ancient Qiang ethnicity in Northwest China had settled down at the Lijiang region since the Third Century as early as during the Tang Dynasty. The Naxi people had created their own hieroglyphic script, known as the "Dongba script", which is constituted by hieroglyphic symbols, phonetic symbols and additional symbols. Dongba script is the only ideographic writing system in use in the world today (Halena et al. 2010).

Most Naxi children are more interested to learn Mandarin and other Chinese dialects (such as the Szechuan and Kunming dialect) as the Naxi language was regarded as a barrier to intellectual development (Niu, 2009). The booming domestic tourism is also one of the reasons for causing less motivation in learning the local language as only less than 300 people mostly from the older generations of the Naxi can grasp the Naxi language and Dongba script currently (Zheng, 2011). Only these older generations can still convey their beautiful folk legends and historical stories, and as they are getting

older and will gradually pass away someday, this valuable language and cultural traditions would follow them to the grave if nothing is done (Zhang and Lu, 2008).

### ***Diminishing authenticity***

Over-commercialization of the Naxi culture has also led to a notable decrease in authenticity. In the Old Town of Lijiang, tourists are surrounded by the ubiquitous Dai music played using the cucurbit flute, as well as the Miao embroidery and Bai costume which are actually produced at Guangzhou, Wenzhou and other areas (Tao and Cen, 2006). Although ethnic dances are widely treated as one of the more common cultural performances, the lack of originality means that it has just become a means to merely amuse tourists and similarly, the traditional Naxi diet has increasingly become monotonous and of low-quality (Zong, 2002). The abuse of the Dongba culture is one of the more prominent threats to cultural authenticity in Lijiang (Yu, 2011). Dongba symbols connected with blessings and good luck are commonly printed on tourism souvenirs as a distinctive commodity to attract tourists, but it is impossible for the tourists to understand the true value of these scripts simply by looking at these simplified symbols during a short travel stop (Yu, 2011). Thus, some scholars worry that the old town is in danger of becoming a cultural museum without vitality (Zhang and Lu, 2008).

### ***Over-saturated tourists***

The structure of tourism market in Lijiang has changed from being dominated by international tourists to one that is abundant with domestic tourists (Tao and Cen, 2006). The unbalanced travelling season is one of the important issues as most tourists only travel during holidays (Tao and Cen, 2006). Since Lijiang is one of the most famous CHT sites in China, the pale-busy season problem is more severe. According to the statistics, during the seven days of the National Day Holiday in 2010, 84,995 tourists had paid the maintenance charge (12.60 USD per person) in the Old Town of Lijiang (He, 2010). Nevertheless, it is difficult to collect fees from individual tourists due to their great mobility and dispersion and these paid tourists are counted mainly from group visitors rather than individuals even though they are the biggest group of visitors in Lijiang (Li, 2005).

### ***Replaced residents and town function***

The silence and ease in the old town has gone as excessive crowds of tourists pour into this small town. Indigenous people have moved out and currently there are just 6,200 households living in the old town compared to 30,000 in 1996 (Hu, 2010). From 1987 to 1999, 37.77% households and 32.73% of indigenous people have moved out, while on the other hand, 4051 outsiders have moved in (Shao,

2004). Houses left by indigenous people are often rented to outside traders as tourist shops or designed as home-stays for tourists. From the government statistics, about 70% of local residents in old town of Lijiang are extraneous people (Tao and Cen, 2006). The Square Street area, the heart of the town, has become a tourist leisure and shopping district accompanying those empty shells of traditional architecture which have lasted over the years (Shao, 2004). The public spaces for folk ceremonies and social networking with neighbors are also invaded by tourists (Shao, 2004). The business and services infrastructure for residents are gradually replaced by tourist communities and expensively cater for tourists, which in turn have increased the living cost (Tao and Cen, 2006) and subsequently aggravated the out-migration movement.

#### ***Low level of tourism industry management***

As the most representative tourism center in Yunnan, Lijiang should ideally have beautiful surroundings and a perfect management system. However, in some sites, low coverage of green areas, excessive rubbish and stream pollution are still relatively outstanding problems (Niu, 2009). Economic effects are often emphasized rather than the aspect of protection and social effects from developing tourist spots and tourist products, which is still an ineradicable concept for some developers and managers (Niu, 2009). The inner transportation management is another issue. For example, most of the taxi drivers in the Lijiang railway station area commonly rip off and overcharge foreign tourists without adhering to a structured fee table in spite of just a 7.8 km trip from the Lijiang station to the Old Town District. Another prominent transportation problem is that public buses generally do not arrive on time (Yunnan Tourism Net, 2011). Undoubtedly, the undeveloped inner transportation network would destroy the image of Lijiang tourism and diminish tourist satisfaction.

## **6. DISCUSSION: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Compared to nature-based tourism, CHT is more complex and impalpable. A community-based CHT model for neighborhood economic development was established in Washington DC (Smith, 2008). The model is composed of a coalition centered on a clearly stated mission, potential partners, education outside the cultural community, asset distribution, scientific research, political support, key partnerships, a strategic plan and sustainable financial support (Smith, 2008). Meanwhile, a basic theoretical framework or model served to clarify the basic conceptions of cultural heritage development combining the classification model, strategy model and business model (Table 2). Since cultural heritage involves

economy, society and environment, the appropriate way on how to develop a perfect tourism product to meet all development goals is the premise of CHT development.

TABLE 2 - BASIC THEORETICAL MODEL ON CULTURAL HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

Type of model	Author/year	Viewpoint
Classification model	DuCros, 2001	Cultural heritage sites can be classified as a matrix model with 9 types according to market appeal and robust city.
Strategy model	Heritage Victoria, 2009	The cultural heritage asset management strategy model consists of executive summary, introduction, legislative framework and heritage standards, policy framework, and strategic context of agency, identification of heritage assets, management action plan, asset maintenance plan, redundant assets plan, asset transfer plan and strategy monitoring.
Business model	Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2009; DFK and MECS, 2010	This business model consists of value propositions, customer segments, channels, customer relationship, revenue streams, key activities, key resources, key partnerships and cost structure.

Cultural heritage development inevitably causes some negative effects despite returning great benefits. Shi and Liu (2007) argue that an impact assessment model in urban historic cultural heritage protection and planning should cover all types of economic, environmental and social impacts (Table 3). Mazzanti (2002) also designed an attribute based on valuation framework for cultural heritages from three cultural functions; social-economic utilization, conservation and public guardianship. Mazzanti (2002) classified conservation attributes into conservation, preservation, restoration, research activities; other elements such as education /information assistance, exhibition, heritage defense are included in cultural attributes.

TABLE 3 - IMPACT ASSESSMENT MODEL IN URBAN HISTORIC CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION AND PLANNING

Type	Factor	Gene
Economic	Praedial	Plot type
	Industrial	Corporation scale
	Commercial	Shop number
	Traffic	Road load Road range
Environmental	Pollution	Infection account
	Noises	Noise intensity
Social	Population	Population density
	Construction	Quality
		Height
Scene		

Source: Shi and Liu (2007)

Meanwhile, a double public good model is designed to assess the full spectrum of cultural heritage values from private market values to social non-market values by including private goods, private consumption of heritage, production function for heritage experiences, stock of preserved historic capital and physical and intellectual access (Sable and Kling, 2001).

Another model is designed to assess cultural heritage values with the following criteria: proximity to heritage properties (500m), parcel fabric coded by heritage categories (year of registration), proximity to historic sites (500m), parks and open space, proximity to water transportation routes (500m), old fields/old growth from the forest inventory, first nation reserves, government owned land, proximity to churches and cemeteries (500m), proximity to abandoned and existing rail lines, results of the archaeological potential model, visibility of the ocean (to 24km), islands with government ownership, proximity to lighthouses (5000m), proximity to schools (2400m), proximity to existing archaeological sites (250m), proximity to trails and k roads (100m), proximity to abandoned mines (100m), proximity to abandoned railway lines (100m), proximity to railway lines and crossings (100m) (EDM, 2005).

Furthermore, the travel cost model that is often used to estimate the value of recreational site experience can be employed to assess the value of cultural heritage. The travel cost model includes number of visits per zone, representativeness of cultural heritage value, travel cost to the site from other zones, a substitute price for the site, an income variable for the zone, and a vector of demographic variables for the zone (Poor and Smith, 2004). In addition to this, a regression model can be used to value cultural heritage in a multi-attribute framework and the components such as entry fees, conservation activity, access policy and additional services (multimedia services and additional temporary exhibitions) are of importance to determine cultural heritage values (Mazzanti, 2003).

## 7. RECOMMENDATION: A PROTECTIVE DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF CHT

A theoretical protective development model of CHT was designed based on analysis of the related literature and the existing circumstances of CHT development in Lijiang (Figure 2). This model is composed of three parts of: support, participation, and balance. It also includes five components of the CHT development process. Since the protection in tourism development is more of a symptomatic project rather than an isolated action, the effectiveness of protection depends on omni-directional support and multi-angle cooperation among all stakeholders. Thus, this study assumes that the protective concept should go through the whole development process of CHT, which generally includes planning, investment, developing, industrialization, managing and upgrading processes. All five components of the CHT development process are mutually connected to each other. Firstly, positive participation will only be achieved if full support is offered to related stakeholders at an affordable cost. In turn, once participation becomes popular, it will undoubtedly create social pressure to attract more attention for larger and wider support among the public towards the protection of CHT. Secondly, balance being the ultimate goal of tourism sustainable development, should land an effective support and positive participation in particular for the equal sharing of benefits especially to vulnerable groups

such as indigenous people. Finally, if all stakeholders satisfy the benefit distribution mechanism, a stronger participation with more discretionary resources will be received.

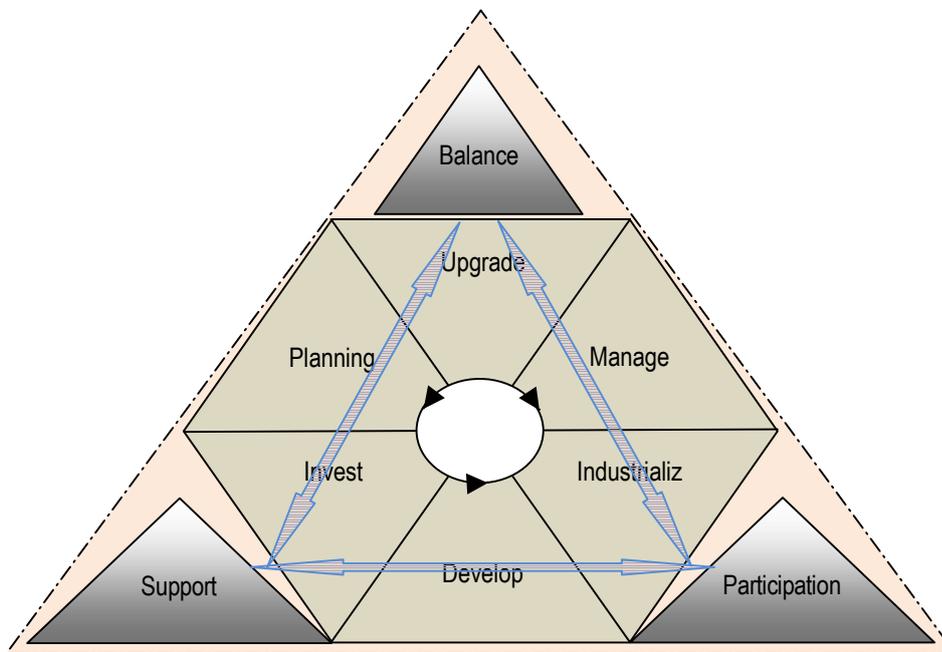


FIGURE 2 - THE THEORETICAL PROTECTIVE DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

In the protective development of CHT, what that cannot be ignored are an effective support, positive participation, as well as a balance safeguard, which will alleviate this triangle model. As for the CHT, the safeguard measure mainly consists of financial, educational, academic, political, legislative, strategic, and planning support from all related stockholders (Table 4).

TABLE 4 - THE REALIZATION MEASURES OF PROTECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

Goal	Realization path	Specific measure
Protective Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism	Effective support	Financial support
		Educational support
		Academic support
		Political support
		Legislative support
		Strategic support
		Planning support
	Positive participation	Local communities
		Authorities
		Tourism operators
		Tourism practitioners
	Balance safeguard	Tourists
		Benefit distribution
		Power equality
		Culture tolerance
Resource control		
	Coordination	

Positive participation in protective development should collaborate with local communities, authorities, tourism operators, tourism practitioners and tourists. The balance safeguard aims to accomplish coordinated development between development and protection. These safeguard measures include benefit distribution, power equality, culture tolerance, resources control and coordination with other economic sectors in planning and development.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

This model is designed to protect cultural heritage in the process of developing tourism based on the case of Lijiang. Based on the life cycle model (Butler, 1980), CHT in Lijiang lies between development and consolidation stages. Thus, this model cannot be applied into the earlier development stages, such as exploration, development and rejuvenation stages, but this model can offer various valuable guidance and approaches to keep CHT sustainable within the other development stages. The reach of this model will not only be confined to CHT as resource destruction or abuse is not only an issue within CHT, but also a global phenomenon caused by rapid economic development and urbanization processes. Hence, this model has a great potential to be referred and partially applied in more widespread fields.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks for the support provided by USM fellowship Grant, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia.

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