

IMPROVING TOURISM EXPERIENCE AT PROMTHER CAPE IN PHUKET THAILAND THROUGH THE ROLES OF TOUR GUIDES

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ABSTRACT

Promthep Cape is one of the well known nature tourist attractions in Phuket, Thailand. One of its attractions offers the beauty of nature that tourists can enjoy, especially during sunset. Another attraction is the existence of a temple of which tourists can use to make offerings to Lord Brahma. Regardless these and many more interesting attractions, Promthep Cape is still lacking of information regarding the explanation of those attractions. Most visitors could not get the narratives about the history, the culture, and other required narratives of Promthep Cape as a popular nature tourism. This will lead to the decrease of tourism experience when visiting Promthep Cape. One source of information that tourists can get is from a tour guide who accompanies them when visiting Promthep Cape. This study tries to answer the question why a tour guide is needed to improve the experience of tourists visiting Promthep Cape, and what are the roles of the tour guide in improving the tourism experience visiting Promthep Cape. The method used is descriptive qualitative by utilizing primary data from observations and interviews, as well as secondary data in the form of related documents. The data is then reduced, interpreted, and analyzed. Results show that a tour guide has 4 roles in improving the experience of tourists visiting Promthep Cape, namely: 1) to increase the tourist knowledge of the destination, 2) to give more meaning in traveling, 3) to provide a sense of security and comfort to tourists, and 4) to act as a translator for foreign tourists, especially those with language limitations.

Keywords: Tourism Experience; Roles of Tour Guide, Promthep Cape

INTRODUCTION

Thailand is a royal state in Southeast Asia and it is often called the country of the white elephant. According to Sarwono, et.al. (2022), Thailand is a country that has a rich cultural heritage both in terms of culture, nature, flora and fauna, ecology, and food. Thailand greatly depends its income on the tourism sector. In fact, Thailand tourism is one of

the leading industries in Southeast Asia and has a high level of productivity. Similarly, according to Sharafuddin (2015), tourism is one of the largest industries in Thailand with the most foreign tourist visits in Southeast Asia. That is why many cities in Thailand are well-known for their tourist destinations. Cities like Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Phuket are some of the most

visited by foreign tourists. They offer variety of tourist attractions, such as nature tourism, ecotourism, culinary tourism, shopping tourism, and heritage tourism.

Phuket is a major tourist destination in Thailand and it is considered the world famous. There are many tourists visiting the province every year. This is very important for Phuket as it is the major source of income for Thailand. Sarwono, et.al. (2022) stated that Phuket is growing fast, with a dynamic economy and progressive society in Southeast Asia and it is the reason why it is nicknamed the Pearl of the Andaman Sea. Phuket is also known by tourists for its diverse culinary delights, lush mountains covering 70% of the entire region and its beautiful beaches such as Kata Beach, Karon Beach, Patong Beach, and dozens of other beaches.

Apart from the beauty of the beaches, Phuket also offers the beauty of sunset sceneries and stunning sea views, at the place called Promthep Cape or Laem Promthep. This tourist destination is located at the southern tip of Thailand and a distance of 19 km from the city center. It is a place in great demand by both domestic and international tourists and has been considered a symbol of the island. Now, after Phuket has become a global destination for beach lovers, it is on this cape that people gather every late afternoon to enjoy the sunset, especially in late December until early March. Promthep Cape means "Brahmas Cape" with a height of 200 feet or 600 meters above sea level. Tourists can see the beauty of Nai Harn Beach and Ko Kaew Island from this place.

Promthep Cape is the place of Phuket's most important landmarks, namely the colorful elephant statues at the shrine and the Kanjanaphisek Lighthouse, shaped like a robotic crab topped with a gilded spire, which is very interesting to see. The lighthouse was built on the occasion of King Bhumibol's 50th anniversary accession. The light from the lighthouse can be seen from as far as 39 kilometers. The top of the lighthouse is the most popular viewpoint where tourists can see a 360-degree panoramic view of Promthep Cape.

Initial observations carried out onsite at Promthep Cape identified that there is a large number of foreign tourist visit to Promthep Cape. They want to enjoy the beauty of nature and also the view of the Andaman Sea and the islands. Additionally, tourists can see several ships sailing by. Some other visitors perform worship rituals at a temple located at Promthep Cape area. Around the temple there are 100 elephant statues made of wood and also a Brahma temple, a place to perform ritual offerings. A unique lighthouse is also visible and can be climbed by visitors to the top floor where visitors can see Promthep Cape views from a height and 360 degrees.

However, behind the complete facilities and attractions at Promthep Cape, and supported by good access and infrastructure, many foreign visitors seemingly not satisfied with their visit, especially when they are not accompanied by a tour guide. These visitors tend to leave the site as soon as they took some photographs and visited all the facilities at Promthep Cape. On the other hand, tourists who are accompanied

by a tour guide tend to stay longer at Promthep Cape. They listen to the information given and described by the tour guide at all the attractions.

It is considered that as a popular tourist destination, Promthep Cape is still lacking in terms of providing information about the attractions, such as the name of the sea, islands, historical values and the cultural value about Promthep Cape. Moreover, the existence of 100 elephant statues and a temple is a big question for foreign visitors because there are no explanations or information boards provided, although there are information boards onsite and written in Thai language, which are seemingly not very helpful. In other words, foreign visitors only rely on explanations from the tour guides who accompany them. Therefore, based on these initial observations, this study will explain why the roles of a tour guide are needed to improve tourism experience visiting Promthep Cape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several literature references derived from previous studies are reviewed in an effort to focus and answer the formulated questions for this study. Firdaus (2020) mentioned that the tourism services carried out by a tour guide were in accordance with the concept of tourism services, starting from transfers, guiding tours, and transfer out. The concept of service is directly related to their strategy in maintaining the local wisdom. While Trenggono (2022) mentioned that tour guides actively direct tourists to visit historical places and tourists have a positive perception of tour guides, especially in the objectivity of

information and services. Agyeman (2022) investigated visitors' perceptions of the importance and performance of the roles of tour guides in order to identify areas needing management interventions to improve visitor satisfaction. While Teng (2020) pointed out that a tour leader positively affected tour leader attachment and tourist participation behaviors. Tourists' perceptions of the professional tour guides in gastronomic tour experiences reveal four core themes: attributes, knowledge, communication skills and value-added experience (Seyitoğlu, 2020). While Yuni (2020) explained that the roles of tour guides can be increased through accompaniment program by higher educations.

It can be concluded that tour guides play an important role in terms of giving information about a destination and also spreading the culture and maintaining local wisdom. Because of this important role, therefore tour guides need to obtain certification to provide objectivity in information and services. Tour guides also play a role in tourist satisfaction, this is because tour guides are a means of communication for tourists during a tour and are a determining factor for tourists to return to visit. In other words, if the tourists are satisfied with their visit, they will spread the information to their friends, recommend their friends to visit the destination, and also the tourist may come and visit the destination again. That is the reason why it is also important for foreign visitors to Promthep are accompanied by a tour guide.

a. Tour Guide

A tour guide is someone whose job is to guide and lead tourists on a tour

and in order to carry out their duties properly, tour guides must have skills in guiding and conveying information to tourists (Hayati & Drihartati, 2021). Meanwhile, according to Ardana (2013) the main task of a tour guide is to provide guidance, information, instructions, and various services to tourists.

From the theories above we can conclude that some of the tasks of tour guides are: 1) recommending interesting tourist spots to tourists, 2) accompanying, guiding and providing data to tourists who are conducting tourism activities, 3) explaining and providing knowledge about tourist objects that are being visited by tourists, 4) making a good impression on the region, country, nation, and culture to tourists, 5) protecting and guaranteeing the safety of tourists.

b. **Tourism Experience**

Tourism experience can be defined as an important impression for individuals who make tourist visits that are subjective, affective and long lasting (Fernandes & Cruz, 2016). While Hidayah & Utami (2021) pointed out that tourism experiences are the end result of the tourist consumption process starting from planning visits, activities at destinations to returning to their place of origin. Tourism experience is a person's journey in the past related to how strong the memories of the trip are embedded in memory (Larsen in Afifah, et.al., 2018) and it is a multidimensional notion consisting of internal and external factors that

shape and influence consumers (Walls et.al. in Afifah, et.al., 2018). Some of the characteristics of tourism experience are: 1) Unique, in which it can be considered unique because experience cannot be repeated or reproduced; 2) Subjective, which is influenced by the perceptions and feelings of different individuals; 3) Dynamic, which can change with the changes in the environment, interactions with other people, and individual feelings; 4) Multi-dimensional, which consists of various aspects such as emotions, feelings, thoughts, and actions; 5) Differentiation, which may vary from one person to another and from one time to another; 6) Process, which is the process that occurs from the beginning to the end of the tour; 7) Integral, which is the whole of the interaction with products, services, and the environment; 8) Satisfying, meaning that it must be fun and satisfying for tourists, so that it is related to perceptions and expectations; and 9) must have meaning that is accepted by tourists, and can leave a positive impressions.

METHOD

The method used is qualitative descriptive and the researcher were the main data gathering instrument. Data gathering were done through field observations and in-depth interviews. Other data sources are documents related with the roles and duties of tour guides and also review of tourist experiences after visiting Promthep Cape. These data can help to analyze and interpret the data

to formulate a conclusion. All data collected are analyzed and interpreted to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Observation Results

From the field observation, it can be concluded that a tour guide needs to explain all the information about Promthep Cape, including the history, the culture, and the nature so that the tourists can have more understanding about Promthep Cape, which offers many beautiful spots for taking pictures overlooking the Andaman Sea and some islands. A tour guide can help give more information about these interesting spots and at the same time increase tourists' experiences when visiting Promthep Cape, compared if they visit it without a tour guide.

Interview Results

From the interviews it can be concluded that a tour guide needs to explain about the history of Promthep Cape, the value and the meaning of the various statues, temples that exist at Promthep Cape. The tour guide must also explain about the signs at Promthep Cape which is mostly written in Thai language. With the various roles of tour guide, Promthep is not just a photo spot or a place to enjoy the beauty of the sunset. Tourists will get the useful information about the history, the values, and many other important information. A tour guide will also ensure the safety of tourists by guiding them to safe places. It can be concluded that a tour guide is someone whose job is to provide guidance, information and instructions about tourist

objects and help with everything that tourists need about the tourist objects they are visiting.

Tour guides are the spearhead of tourism activities, where one of the tour guides is tasked with building the image of tourism in an area. This role is included in the responsibilities of a tour guide, namely to produce a good impression of the region, country, nation and culture on tourists. And there are factors that influence tourist experience, namely emotional factors such as a sense of security, comfort and pleasure while in tourist destinations so that good memories can be realized by tourists.

Tourists are afraid of getting lost during the trip so that tourists will feel more comfortable when using tour guide services. The roles of tour guide are to accompany, guide and provide data to tourists who are carrying out tourism activities, and the role for protect and guarantee the safety of tourists.

Tour guides enhances the travel experience, namely providing famous tourist recommendations in a tourist destination for first-time tourists. There are significant differences when using a tour guide and traveling solo. This role is included in the role or responsibility of a tour guide, namely explaining and providing knowledge about tourist attractions that are being visited by tourists. This can influence tourist experience, such as the availability of information on communication factors between tour guides and tourists.

Tour guides are very helpful in providing information to foreign tourists who don't know much information, history about Promthep Cape and its

culture. Many tourists are not aware of the role of tour guide in guiding and providing a good experience on the trip. Results from data interpretation, it can be concluded that there are mainly 5 roles of tour guides, namely: 1) recommending interesting tourist spots to tourists, 2) accompanying, guiding and providing data to tourists who are conducting tourism activities, 3) explaining and providing knowledge about tourist objects that are being visited by tourists, 4) making a good impression on the region, country, nation, and culture to tourists, 5) protecting and guaranteeing the safety of tourists. Additionally, there are also 7 factors that can affect the tourist experience in traveling, namely: 1) Physical factor, 2) Social factor, 3) Emotional factor, 4) Economy factor, 5) Communication factor, 6) Personal factor, 7) Marketing factor.

Review Results

Study of reviews in general about Promthep Cape described that visiting tourists agree that they had beautiful experiences at Promthep Cape. They also agreed that Promthep Cape has a very beautiful sunset with a combination of rocky mountains and a beautiful beach view. Apart from that, Promthep Cape is a beautiful photo spot with cultural values. When combined, Promthep Cape is a tourist attraction that is highly recommended by tourists. Tourism experience is the result of the interaction of destinations, tourism systems, communities and other tourists. It can also be defined as an important impression for individuals who make tourist visits that are subjective, affective

and long lasting. So that the tourist experience must be managed properly in order to create a quality tourist experience.

The Roles for Tour Guides in Promthep Cape

As mentioned previously, Promthep Cape is very limited in providing information, so tourists who come usually only aim to enjoy the beautiful sunset and sea. Therefore the roles for a tour guide is very important to give such important information to improve the experience of tourists, so that foreign tourists who come to Promthep Cape can get information such as history and other useful information that can help the tour guide to translate the existing information boards and give more meanings to their visit.

Tourists who come without a tour guide will only take pictures for fun because these foreign tourists will not get information in the form of existing explanations. Tour guides play a very important role in guiding tourism activities, especially when visiting historical sites. In addition to the role of providing information, the tour guide also has the role of translator. The need for tour guides for communication facilities is an important point so that various existing rules the prohibition on using footwear will be conveyed by the tour guide and tourists can find out the reason behind the regulation.

Middle-aged tourists tend to use a tour guide in their travels. This is also in line with the results of an interview that tourists will feel safer and more comfortable when using a tour guide. In

addition to the 3 factors above, tour guides also have an impact on one's travel experience. However, the availability of tour guides at Promthep Cape is still not optimal because there are no local guides available at the tourist attraction so that tourists must use a tour guide on their own trips.

CONCLUSIONS

Promthep Cape, a landmark in Phuket, Thailand, has a high foreign tourist visits. However, the information about this tourist attraction is not widely known by tourists. This is due to limited information, namely, there is no explanation in foreign languages on information boards at tourist attractions. Promthep Cape is only known for its natural beauty, sunsets and photo spots, but not known for the history and the values from spiritual worship, including the existence of 100 elephant statues and the Brahma Temple.

A tour guide is needed to improve the experience of foreign tourists visiting Promthep Cape because foreign tourists who travel alone without the help of a tour guide will only take pictures and see things such as light houses, colorful elephant statues, views of the Andaman Sea and beautiful sunsets. They missed the important things such as the history, the values, and the meaning of this tourist attraction. Foreign tourists who come to Promthep Cape need a tour guide for several reasons such as increasing the knowledge, the value and the experience of the tourist.

The second role of the tour guide is to give more meaning in traveling, because there are tourists who visit

Promthep Cape to see and capture photos only, so there is no special meaning when visiting. Tour guides are very helpful in giving more meaning when traveling on tours, at Promthep Cape, such as visiting and explaining other attractions, for example exploring the lighthouses, the museums, see the 100 elephant statues with information and history conveyed by tour guides. This kind of information will not be obtained if tourists do not use the services of a tour guide.

A tour guide will give a very beautiful experience by providing information related to history. The role of the tour guide in the trip gives more meaning to be remembered for a long time. Tour guide also provide a sense of security and comfort to foreign tourists. This can be seen when foreign tourists with middle age tend to use tour guides during their visits to Promthep Cape, a tour guide also said in an interview that tour guides will take the foreign tourists to a safe place and tour guides will ensure the safety of tourists.

Moreover, a tour guide is also acting as a translator for foreign tourists, especially those with language limitations. Promthep Cape has several signs starting from the entrance, museums, statues and others. Based on the author's observations, the role of the tour guide above will also affect the tourist experience, the experience of tourists themselves can be concluded as having the following characteristics: 1) unique; 2) subjective; 3) dynamic; 4) multi-dimensional; 5) differentiation; 6) process; 7) integral; 8) satisfying and 9) has meaning.

From the nine points above, there is one point that has been felt by one of the informants, namely has meaning. The experience left a positive impression on his trip and led to his return visit to Promthep Cape. Tourism experience between individuals will certainly be different, and this can be influenced by several factors such as physical, social, emotional, economic, communication, personal and marketing. If these factors are observed at the Promthep Cape tourist attraction, the physical factors will greatly influence the foreign tourist experience.

The physical factor itself can also be in the form of weather and conditions. If the foreign tourists visit Promthep Cape when it rains, their travel experience will be potentially dissatisfied. This is because Promthel Cape is a natural tourist attraction so if it is raining, tourists will not be able to explore this tourist attraction. The second factor that will have an effect is the communication factor, as mentioned in the role of the tour guide above, if tourists come without being accompanied by a tour guide, then Promthep Cape is just a photo spot. In this communication factor, the availability of information about tourist objects will be a major influence on the tourist experience.

The last factor that influences the tourist experience at Promthep Cape is emotional factors such as feeling comfortable and safe when making tourist visits. With a tour guide, tourists will feel safe and comfortable because the tour guide will help recommend safe and comfortable places to visit.

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