

GTTP CASE STUDY WRITING COMPETITION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2010

To Explore the Unexplored

Can suburban Tai Po be developed into an Ideal
Destination for Green Tourism in Hong Kong?



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ALDO PAPONE AWARDS &
GTTP's GLOBAL PARTNERS!

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 - Founder of HKTraveler.com Limited (旅行家有限公司),
the first local travel agency accredited with “Green Globe”

- ii) Mr Walter Chu (朱維德先生)
 - Father of “Green Tourism” in HK, a renowned TV actor cum veteran
local tour guide specializing in hiking and diving trips in HK in 1970’s

- iii) Mr Leon Lau
 - Founder of hk-green.com and an experienced green tour-guide in HK

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- v) Mr Cheuk, owner of the Bicycle Renting Company in Tai Po

- vi) All the warm and kind-hearted tourists and local residents we interviewed
in suburban Tai Po and Tsim Sha Tsui

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Chapter 1 Preface

Tourism – Can we still name it a “Smokeless Industry” in Hong Kong now?

In the 1970s-80s, there used to be a very common saying in the local context, i.e., ‘Tourism is a “smokeless industry” in Hong Kong’. Indeed, according to the HK Yearbooks, tourism accounted for 13.8 % of the GDP in those times

At that time, tourism was hailed as a money-spinner by all Hongkongers as they believed without any factories or chimneys required, without any black fumes exhausted, tourism could bring in tens of thousands of foreign tourists and millions dollars of foreign exchange, contributing to and sustaining the economy of the territory.

However, as time goes by, local citizens, like other global citizens do, start to realize there is a high price we have to pay for the development of mass tourism, thanks to advancement in information technology and the growing awareness of the importance of environmental protection as a global trend. For instance, the construction of HK Disneyland has necessitated a vast amount of reclamation work, which in return caused much damage to the surrounding waters around Penny’s Bay.

To offset these undesirable impacts of mass tourism, we find green tourism emerging as a possible solution to HK. It is because nicknamed “*Tourism with a Conscience*”, Green Tourism “strives to have a low visitor impact” and “facilitates respect of indigenous culture and active socio-economic involvement of local peoples”. (Honey 2004). If green tourism can be launched successfully in HK, it would definitely provide a better alternative to mass tourism for both local citizens and foreign tourists.

After our initial research, we find that rural Tai Po is blessed with a multitude of natural resources and habitats like woodlands, geological formations, insects, that can all be fully and RESPONSIBLY capitalized upon. Later, we were also inspired by Maslow’s theory of Hierarchy of Needs mentioned in our textbook. Therefore, we decide that in this project, it is our first aim to 1) **have a stocktaking of all the green factors favourable for developing green tourism in suburban Tai Po** and 2) **study the feasibility of developing the district into an ideal destination for green**

tourism.

After conducting a detailed analysis of Tai Po's green potentials, we would also like to see what we can do to fulfill tourists needs. Therefore, we would then try to **3) apply Maslow's theory of Hierarchy of Needs to the proposed destination** so that our design can truly meet the different needs of tourists.

Afterwards we would **4) try to examine the difficulties involved in this proposal** and **5) assess some possible negative impacts on both the environment and the community.** It is hoped that by exploring the natural and cultural assets of this residential and industrial area, we can **6) make relevant and valid suggestions to the stakeholders concerned** that can **7) help people come to a better understanding of another charming side of HK and the true meaning and implication of Green Tourism to HK.**



Chapter 2 Schedule of Work and Methodologies

2.1 Working Schedule

Early - late March	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Formed the group2. Searched for interested topics/areas to work on
Early April	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pinning down the topic: Suburban Tai Po2. Meetings with Teacher advisor3. Worked out focusing questions to explore
April	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Research for definition and background of Green Tourism2. Research for historical, cultural and ecological information about Tai Po3. Consultation sessions with teacher advisor
May	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Site visits to different places in suburban Tai Po2. Consultation sessions with teacher advisor3. Start to write up the case study
June	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue with the write-up2. Interviews with experts and professionals.3. Meetings with teacher advisor

2.2 Methodologies and Theories Applied

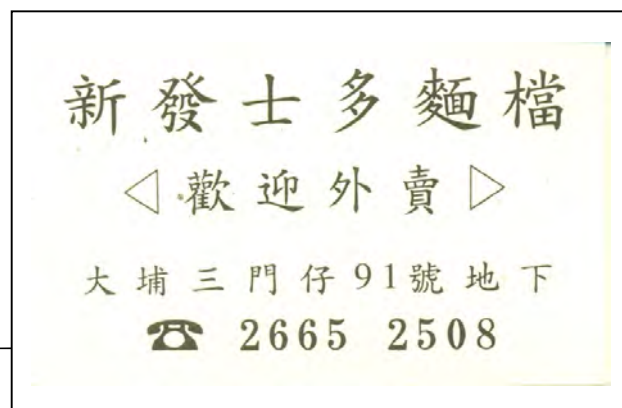
Our data is divided into two parts, **first-hand** and **second-hand data**. First-hand data refers to the information we get directly without any other channels, like site visits and interviews. And second-hand data refers to the information we get through established channels like the Internet and books.

Firstly, we conducted site visits to many places, including Tai Po Market MTR Station and related traffic routes, to analyze the green transportation involved in the development process, and attractions like Fung Yuen Butterflies Reserve, Sha Lo Tung, Ting Kok, San Mun Tsai, Ma Shi Zhou and Tai Po Kau, to take photos and get information about them and their resources.

Secondly, we have also conducted interviews with professionals in the tourism industry like Mr. Walter Chu, Mr. Charles Lee and Mr. Leon Lau, for their professional interpretation towards Green Tourism in Hong Kong. Besides, we have also conducted interviews with the local businesses, to discuss how the development of green tourism may influence them, they are owner of a noodle restaurant in San Mun Tsai, owners of some kiosks in San Mun Tsai and owner of a bicycle lending shop in Tai Po Market. Moreover, we have also spoken with some foreign tourists in Tsim Sha Tsui and Tai Po, to find out if they know anything about green tourism in Hong Kong and whether or not they are interested in that.

Thirdly, we have also visited public libraries and conducted online research, in order to find some definitions of green tourism and the origins of it.

Fourthly, we have also applied or adapted some theories of Maslow (“Hierarchy of Needs), Mr. David Man (Experiencing Nature with “5 Senses”) and Mr. Charles Lee (Conservation starts with Appreciation), to justify our points of view in a more authoritative way.



2.3 Findings of our Interviews

Date of interview: 16.6.2010 – 17.6.2010

Place of interview: Tsim Sha Tsui

Number of interviewees: 30

Question 1

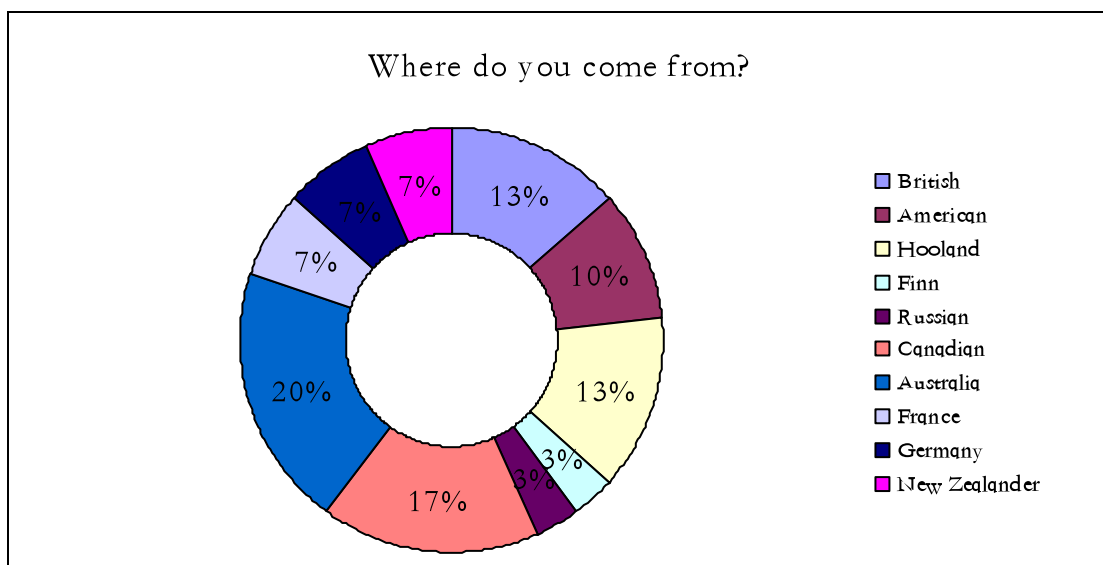
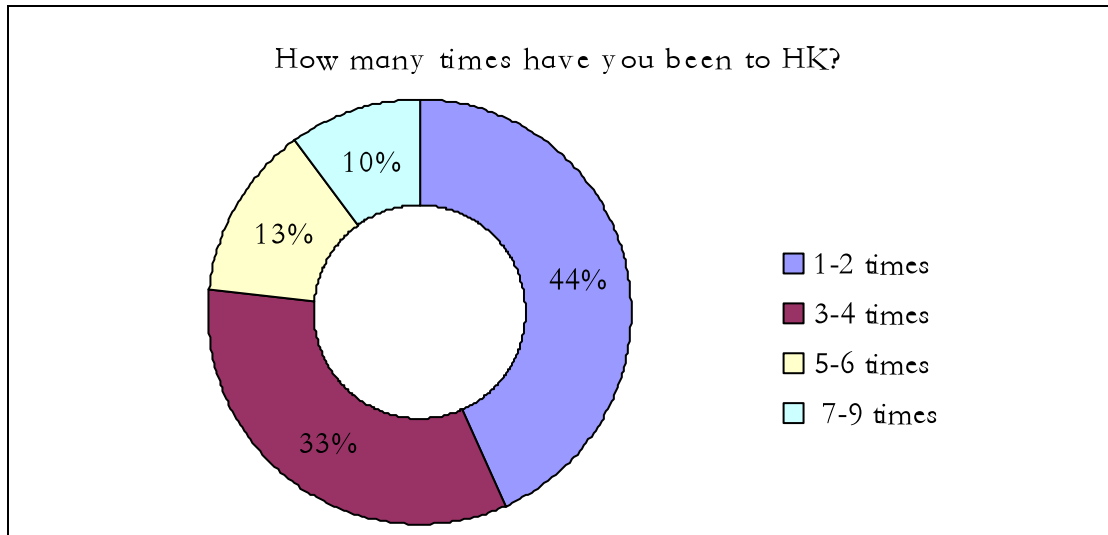


Figure.1 shows the number of the nationality of our interviewees. We have 30 interviewees. There are 4 British, 3 American, 4 Holland, 1 Finn, 1 Russian, 5 Canadian, 6 Australia, 2 France, 2 Germany and 2 New Zealander. The figure shows that we have tourists from different countries.

Question 2



In figure 2, we can find that 13 of the interviewees had been to Hong Kong for 1-2 times. 10 of them had been to Hong Kong for 3-4 times. 4 of them had been to Hong Kong for 5-6 times. 3 of them had been to Hong Kong for 7-9 times.

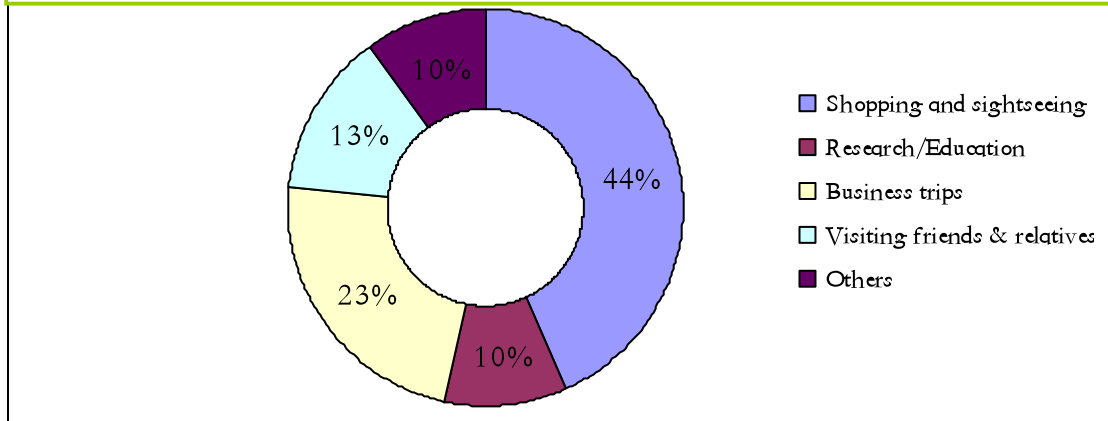


Figure 3 shows that 13 of the interviewees came to Hong Kong for shopping. 3 of them came to Hong Kong for research or education. 7 of them came to Hong Kong for business trips. 4 of them came to Hong Kong for visiting friends and relatives. 3 of them came to Hong Kong for others reasons.

Question 4

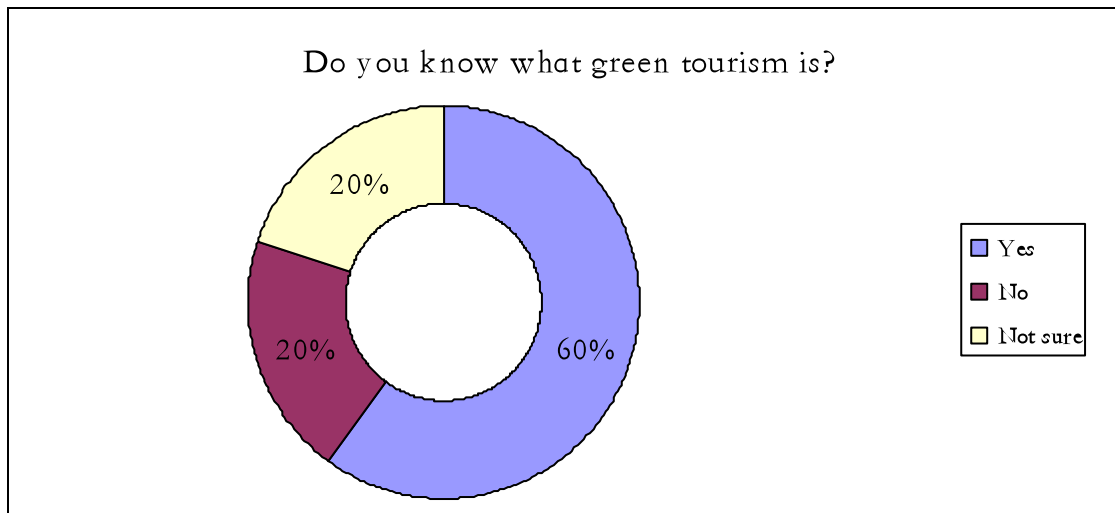


Figure 4 shows that 18 of the interviewees knew what is green tourism and 6 of them did not know. Also, there are 6 people who were not sure what is green tourism.

Question 5

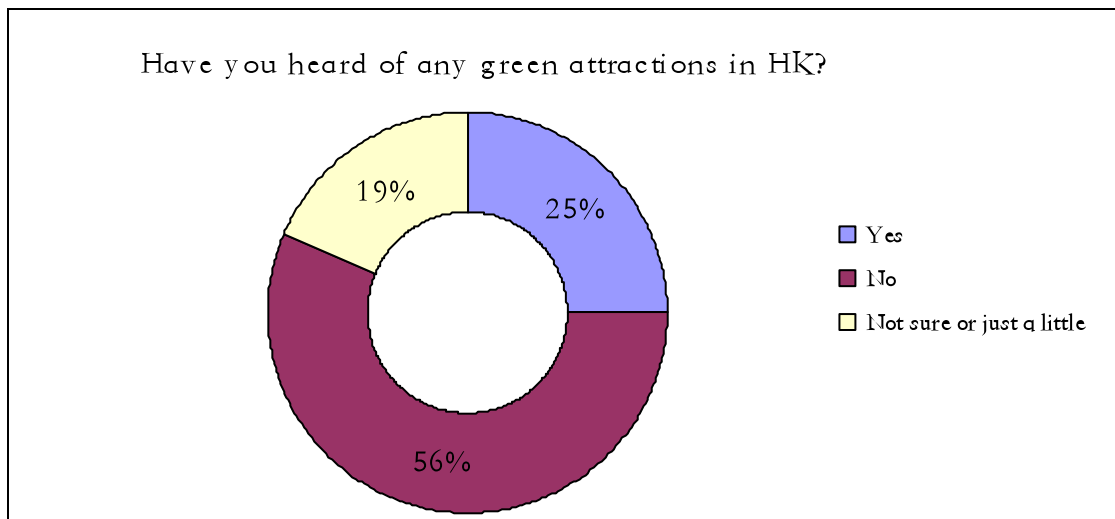
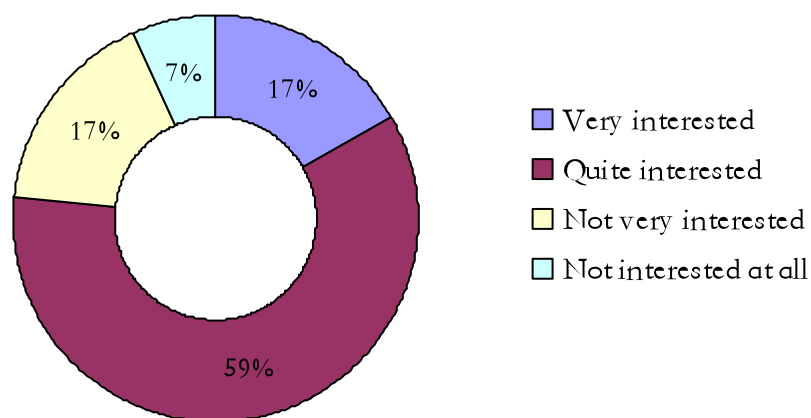


Figure 5 shows that 8 of the interviewees have heard something about green attractions in Hong Kong and 18 of them haven't. Besides, 6 of them were not sure or knew just a little.

Question 6

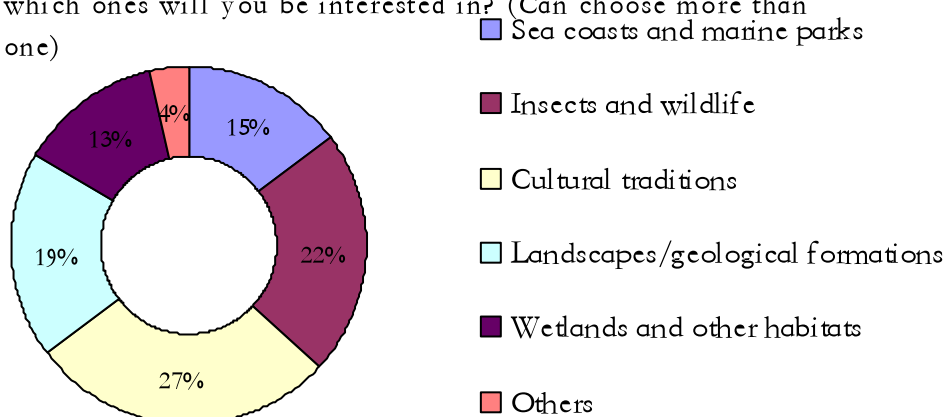
If green tourism is developed and promoted in HK, will you be interested to join it?



In figure 6, we can find that 5 of the interviewees will be very interested to join it if green tourism is developed and promoted in Hong Kong. 18 of them will be quite interested. 5 of them will not be very interested to join it. 2 of them are not interested at all.

Question 7

If green tourism is developed in HK and the following natural resources are developed into tourist attractions responsibly, which ones will you be interested in? (Can choose more than one)



In figure 7, most of tourists are interested in cultural tradition. Moreover, many tourists are interested in insects and wildlife. Also, tourists are interested in Landscapes/ geological formations and wetland/other habitats. 2 of them have others opinions.

Summary of our Findings:

Having a brief analysis based on the above statistics, we come to the conclusion that most tourists do not know much about green tourism in HK but they would be eager to have a taste of it if green tourism products are offered to them an alternative.



We presented the tourists with flowers after the interview to show our hospitality of Hong Kong to them.





Chapter 3 Focusing Questions

We hope that in the end of our study, we will be able to answer the following focusing questions:

1. What is “Green Tourism” actually?
2. Where does the concept of “Green Tourism” originate from?
3. What is the origin of green tourism in Hong Kong?
4. Why is “Green Tourism” so important?
5. How is Green Tourism implemented in HK?
6. How successful is HK in the implementation of “Green Tourism” when compared

with the case in other countries?

7. How has green tourism changed in Hong Kong?
 8. Are there any turning or crucial points?
 9. Has there been enough emphasis on green tourism from the HK government and Tourism Board?
 10. What is the interpretation of green tourism ourselves? What is the brief background and history of Tai Po?
 11. What are the main natural/cultural elements in each attraction?
 12. Why these attractions are worth for tourists to look at?
 13. Can this tour satisfy tourists' needs? (Maslow's theory)
 14. Can tourists have five-senses-enjoyment in this tour? (Mr. David Man's theory)
-
15. What are the stakeholders related in this tour?
 16. Will there be any difficulties in developing green tourism in the district?
 17. What are the benefits of developing green tourism in suburban Tai Po?
 18. Will any side effects arise to the local community and the indigenous creatures?
 19. How can we solve the problems generated?
 20. What is the prospect of green tourism in HK after all?

Chapter 4 On the Global Scale: A Brief Study of Green Tourism

4.1 *What – Definitions of Green Tourism*

In general, green tourism may best be defined as not having a single definition as the list of definitions is endless. It is because the history of green tourism is not too long and people have not yet come to a fixed or official definition for it. Thus, the definition of green tourism will always be determined by the interpretations of individuals.

However, there are suggestions that the basic concept of green tourism is equal to that of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. For instance, the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as “*responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people.*”

Another definition adopted in 1996 by the World Conservation Union claims that Green Tourism is a kind of

“Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples.”

Our Own Interpretation and Understanding of “Green Tourism”

Whichever definition we take, we find one thing in common, i.e., all the definitions stress that the tourism activities must be nature-based and environmentally friendly to both natural habitats, wildlife, community and its people.

Therefore, green tourism activities should endeavor to minimize tourists’ impact on the environment as well as protecting natural resources during their travels. By facilitating activities like studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery, wild plants and animals, as well as learning new knowledge about ecological environment and cultural elements, developing green tourism, to a large extent, would benefit the environment by minimizing the problems that may affect the environment in travels.

4.2 Origins & History of Green Tourism – When and where did the concept spring out?

4.2.1 Different Origins of Green Tourism in the West

Version 1:

Though there is not an agreement on the exact date of the concept of “Green Tourism”, it is generally accepted that the term was coined from the conservationist movement in Latin America in the 1970’s, when Green Tourism became viewed as a potential alternative to the destructive industries such as logging, oil drilling, mining, and other natural resource extractive industries.



Logging

Oil drilling

Version 2:

Another version is that Green Tourism first became popular in East Africa in the 1970's as a reaction to the rampant elephant and rhino poaching there. Scientists and park officials suggested that the only way to protect these wildlife species was to give those living near the national parks a financial incentive. Green Tourism thus emerged to provide this more humanitarian and civilized alternative to killing the wild animals.



Tourism, as an economic activity, is a better alternative to logging and poaching

Version 3:

The origin of green tourism is also connected to the growth of the environmental movement in the 1960-70s, when people in the developed countries began seeking for more adventurous and environmentally friendly modes of travel.

At the same time, developing countries began to view traditional tourism as a failing development strategy as they saw the negative impacts of mass tourism including currency black markets, drug use and trafficking, prostitution, and the spread of AIDS, as well as the phenomenon of “leakage” of profits back to wealthy countries.

In a backlash against these trends, developing countries throughout the world recognized green tourism as a way to promote a cleaner, safer, and greener alternative to mass tourism.

4.2.2 Historical Development of Green Tourism in Hong Kong

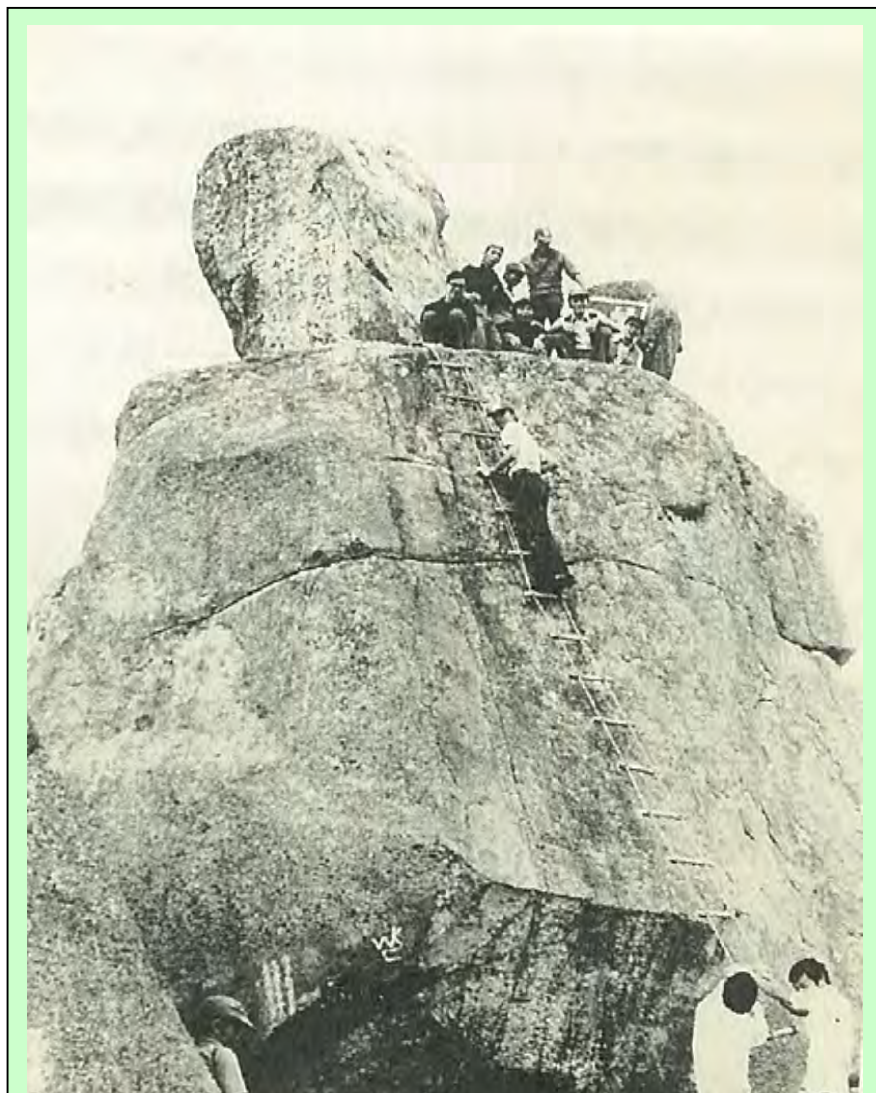
As for the local context, there are **two milestones** in the development of Green

Tourism in HK.

Stage 1: Mr Walter Chu (朱維德先生), “Father of Green Tourism in HK”

In the local context, the earliest development of green tourism can be traced back to 1970’s, when Mr Walter Chu (朱維德先生), a famous TV actor cum amateur mountaineer of HK, started inviting interested hikers to show up and go hiking together on a local newspaper called Overseas Chinese Daily News (華僑日報). Due to the overwhelming response, he was then invited by Television Broadcasting Limited to operate two travel agencies, namely 見聞會社 for outbound tours and Schweppes Sea and Land Local Tours Ltd (玉泉水陸旅行社) for local tours.

As the tours he organized involved outdoor activities like hiking, trekking, diving in the countryside, he gradually became a pioneer in organized green tourism and is highly regarded as “the Father of Green Tourism” in HK.



A precious photo of how green
tourists climbed up the famous
Amah Rock (望夫石) in 1970's.
(Courtesy of Mr Walter Chu)



An interview with Father of Green Tourism in Hong Kong

Stage 2: The outbreak of SARS in 2003

According to Mr Charles Lee, founder of hktraveler, the popularity of Green Tourism reached its peak in 2003, when HK was struck by an outbreak of a plague called SARS. As HK was declared a plague area, citizens were prohibited from traveling overseas and thus resorted to local tours that exposed them to the rural areas which promised them fresh air and beauty of mother nature.

When the plague was over, the popularity of green tourism once dropped in 2004 but soon resumed to a constant level in 2005, as a large number of hikers had developed an interest in hiking and other outdoor pursuits. Thus, green tourism continues to be well received and develop steadily in HK.



People rushed to the countryside for fresh air and greenery during SARS

Stage 3: Looking Ahead to a Promising Future with HK National Geopark

According to Mr Charles Lee, founder of hktraveler, the prospect of Green tourism is promising and is indeed an “irreversible trend” in HK.

Mr Lee’s optimism is not unfounded in consideration of the launching of the first National Geopark in HK. As the park is a world class attraction with many stunning rock formations, many green tourism operators expect this new attraction to attract a large number of both local citizens and foreign nature lovers, especially adventure seekers. With extensive promotion work to be done by HK Tourism Board in the near future, the popularity of Green Tourism is about reach another peak in the years to come.



The first National is expected to bring Green tourism to another peak in HK.

4.2.3 Rationales – Why is Green Tourism so important?

1. Mother Nature has its Own Right of Survival!!!!!!

While tourism industry has been capitalizing on the natural and cultural resources of different destinations for a long time, few realize that the natural environments of a destination actually have intrinsic values that outweigh their values as tourism assets and justify their own existence.

Indeed, from the Chinese Buddhist perspective, all creatures are born equal on earth and thus are entitled to the right of survival.

By promoting green tourism, we can spread the message to the visitors that when traveling, we should behave responsibly, learning to take care of and live with Mother Nature in harmony instead of merely exploiting it in pursuit of superficial pleasures.

2. Symbiotic Relationship between Nature and Mankind

All creatures on earth are not isolated entities as their survivals are interdependent on each other. For instance, farmlands provide frogs with a natural habitat while the latter can eat the bad insects for the farmlands. If the natural environment keeps on being exploited in different tourism activities, not only human beings but all creatures will be victimized.

By facilitating a wider exposure to the natural environment, green tourism provides a

chance for tourists to realize the importance of this chain relationship and learn to respect this mutualism.

3. As a mechanism for Sustainable Development

As aforementioned in the definition session, green tourism aims to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the natural environment. This rationale is actually in line with the principle of “sustainable development”, put forward by World Trade Organization in 1987, i.e., to

“meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.”

As both concepts aim to preserve and maintain the environment in good shape forever. Green tourism can therefore be promoted as a means to putting sustainable development in implementation and real practice for the common good of mankind.

4. Improving the Quality of Life

Living in the materialistic world, it is hard for one to slow down his pace of life and relax himself. By immersing themselves in the Nature, green tourists can draw themselves from the bustling city life and enrich their spirituality in a natural environment. They can learn to appreciate the wonders of the natural world and unwind their physical and mental well being.

5. Enhancing the Environmental Consciousness

Technological advancement like aircrafts or machinery accelerates productivity in modern times. Sad but true, it brings about pollution at the same time.

As a defense mechanism, green tourism provides an incentive for the research and development of green products. Tourism products with minimal environmental impact like eco-tours, eco-lodge or electric cars are developed to combat these undesirables. In consequence, the adverse effects of modern technology can be offset and

compensated.

Chapter 5 In the Local Context:

Feasibility of developing suburban Tai Po into an Ultimate Destination for “Green Tourism”

5.1 A Brief Background and History of suburban Tai Po

Geographical Location

Located at the northern part of New Territories, Tai Po is made up of two main areas, namely Tai Po and Sai Kung, which is known as the Backyard Garden of Hong Kong.

Where does the name “Tai Po” come from?

Interesting to note, in Chinese pronunciation, Tai Po means big steps, as in the past, Tai Po was a big forest, with a lot of wild and scary animals, so people would have to pass Tai Po with big steps.

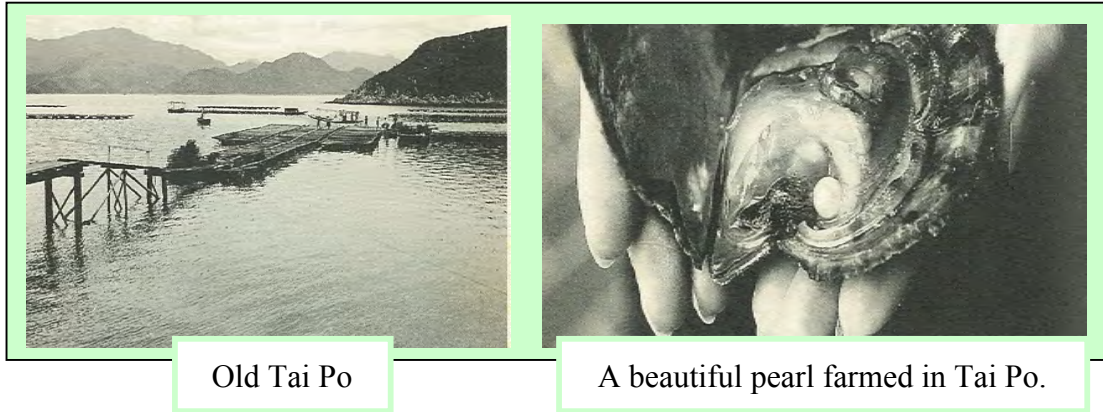
Historical Development of Tai Po – The Pearl Farming industry

According to local archaeologists, there had already been human activities in Tai Po as early as in the Neolithic period, as pieces of stone tools and pottery were found nowadays.

From the Tang Dynasty in AD 963, the indigenous inhabitants of Tai Po lived by farming pearls around Tolo Harbour (吐露港), with the business reaching its peak in the Song Dynasty. Because of that, Tai Po was also called the Pearls Port.

However, the pearl farming business gradually declined in Ming Dynasty because of lack of production, and Tai Po was transformed into a fishing port, which is one of the reasons why there are so many fishing villages left in Tai Po nowadays.

After the transformation, Tai Po developed rapidly. In 1672, the Deng ancestors established the Tai Po Market there, encouraged a lot of people to run their businesses there, and thus become the hub of water transport, ships arrived and departed from here to many important cities in mainland China.



Old Tai Po

A beautiful pearl farmed in Tai Po.

5.2 *A Stocktaking of all the “Green Potentials” available in suburban Tai Po*

In many Hongkongers’ mind, Tai Po is a densely populated industrial and residential area. Paradoxically, the district, at the same time, is blessed with such an exuberance of natural resources that its promises great potentials for the development of green tourism.

Here is an analysis of all the “Green potentials “ that we firmly believe that can be RESPONSIBLY capitalized upon.

a. Green Environment – Second Least Polluted District in HK

As in the case of many populous and developed regions in the world, HK suffers from the problem of air pollution. Fortunately, thanks to its vast areas of countryside and greenery, Tai Po is the second lowest polluted district in Hong Kong, despite the fact that it is at the same time an industrial and highly-populated residential area.

Besides, Tai Po is fortunate to have a large amount of green areas which is rare in Hong Kong's towns. Pat Sin Leng is one of the symbolic natural landmarks in Tai Po, as well as Hong Kong. The naturally green environment provides the best condition for green tourism to develop in there.

Pat Sin Leng →



b. Green Attractions – A Multitude of Natural Habitats and Assets

i) Fung Yuen (Phoenix Garden) Butterfly Reserve

Covering an area of 42 hectares, Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve has been best known for its diverse species of butterflies, with a total of 200 kinds, accounting for 80% of Hong Kong's total number of kinds. Some species can rarely be seen around the world, including Common Birdwing(裳鳳蝶)and White Dragontail(燕鳳蝶).

Besides butterflies, there is also a very wide range of plants kinds. Because of these achievements, Fung Yuen has been declared one of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department since 1980. In 2004, Fung Yuen was ranked No.4 in the list of priority sites for enhanced conservation.

Since 2005, Tai Po Environmental Association has cooperated with the Hong Kong government, and opened a Nature and Culture Education Centre there, which aimed at promoting environmental awareness and understanding, encouraging citizens to conserve the environment and commenting on Hong Kong's environmental problems. Tourists can get in the centre with an admission fee of \$20 and there is also a souvenir shop for tourists to buy postcards or photos of butterflies.



Wow! We arrived at Fung Yuen!!



A beautiful butterfly...



Common Birdwing(裳鳳蝶)

ii) Sha Lo Tung

Being a basin located at the highland of Northern Tai Po, Sha Lo Tung is famous for being a popular habitat of dragonflies and damselflies. Indeed, as the only freshwater wetland in Hong Kong and one of the few well-kept natural environments, a total of 115 kinds of dragonflies, including rare species like *Macromida katae* and *Macromedia ellenae*, have been found there.

The place is not only famous for its great number of various dragonflies but also famous for its unpolluted rivers and dense forest, which becomes a home of 170 kinds of herbs, 100 kinds of birds and freshwater fishes, including the Hong Kong exclusive *Macropodus hongkongensis*.

In consideration of the above, Sha Lo Tung is simply a natural paradise. No wonder it is regarded by many local ecologists and environmentalists as the second best place for high ecological value (after Mai Po wetland in Yuen Long).



iii) Ting Kok

Located at the eastern part of Tai Po Town, Ting Kok is a silent village with many natural resources. One of them is mangroves, which can rarely be seen around the world, but is a significant feature of Hong Kong countryside, they grow on the coastal area of Ting Kok, and they are very close to each other, thus we are also able to find many coastal animals.

For example, we can find starfish, which we actually believed they definitely don't exist in Hong Kong before the field trip there. They just lie on the sandy shore when the tide is low. They all have different characteristics, some having 4 arms while some even have 7, so "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" should be sung in Ting Kok this time, but on the sandy shore.

Besides, visitors can also find many small crabs hiding in the sand. We were able to recognize where they are hiding because they just make different holes over and again, in order to avoid our sight. They are really tiny crabs, you may need a magnifying glass to look at them clearly, so be careful while looking at them, because human's big foot may bring deaths to them.

On top of that, we are also able to find many conches and shells in Ting Kok. Like starfishes, they just lie on the sandy shore in silence. Another feature is that they all have different shapes because they are hit by the strong currents of water. Tourists can examine them and take pictures with these unique conches and shells.



A little starfish



A little crab



We say hello to mangrove☺



The mangroves



Conches and shells

iv) San Mun Tsai

Located at the western part of Plover Cave, this historic place is famous for its still-kept fishing village culture, which has been lasted for many years. Once the biggest fishing village in Tai Po, San Mun Tsai is now a much smaller village, due to the construction of Plover Cave Reservoir in 1960, when the whole village was removed to the current site. However, San Mun Zhai still remains its silence, which can hardly be found in modernized Hong Kong nowadays.

The most impressive thing about San Mun Zhai is the fish farms on the sea shore and the sight of fishermen working very hard on them. It was just a spectacular view from the bridge entering San Mun Zhai.

Some steps further, it's the New San Mun Zhai Village, with all the houses built along the coastline. The villagers are very welcoming as they kept telling us about the history of San Mun Zhai and their fishing life.

We were even brought to visit the San Mun Tsai Museum, which displayed many old photos of San Mun Tsai and even some stuffs used by fishermen, the information is very detailed and they are just wonderful.

Besides, there is also a wall exhibition, which showed many photos of San Mun Zhai and we could learn the development of it very easily. Generally, the fishing culture here is fantastic and can rarely be seen in any other parts of the world.





We are fisherman!



Fishing village



Smile 😊

Tai Po Geoheritage Centre

v. Ma Shi Chau

Located just next to San Mun Tsai, this ecological place is very famous for its various forms of rocks and geography. As one of the attractions of the new Hong Kong GeoPark, this place certainly becomes one of the most popular natural attractions in Hong Kong. Visitors will be amazed by the various forms and even colours of rocks.

Tourists can get to Ma Shi Zhou by walking a long trail from San Mun Tsai for about 45 minutes. On the way, you can see a lot of grave in traditional Chinese style scattered around. Besides, at one point, you can see the spectacular views of North-eastern New Territories. You are surrounded by high hills and blue water. The scenery is just awesome.

When first arrived at Ma Shi Zhou, you should be reminded that it's already the first feature, that's the tombolo connecting San Mun Tsai and the island of Ma Shi Zhou. It's very rare around the world and its formation is also very interesting.

What is a tombolo?

Basically, a tombolo is a ridge of beach material (typically sand), built by wave action, that connects an island to the mainland.

In the past, as the sea between the two islands was very narrow, the sand and rocks were blown by the slow but special sea current, and eventually piled together. That really shows how mysterious the natural world is and tourists may also find walking on the tombolo very interesting, as that part didn't exist in the past but was just formed by the sea current.



Besides, visitors can explore how various rocks were formed by observing the rock sites and reading trailside interpretation plates. They can also learn about some natural phenomena like wave erosion, weathering and folding.

The Permian rock at Ma Shi Chau is estimated to be approximately 500 meters thick. The southeastern part of the island is an assembly of powdery grey to pale red calcareous siltstone and charcoal-tone alternation beds of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. In the northern part of the island is a mainly thick layer of siltstone, sandstone and conglomerate. So, Ma Shi Chau Special Area is a good place for expedition.

Besides, Ma Shi Chau is good place for ecological survey. The visitors can visit a variety of marine plants and animals like sea cucumbers, crabs, Screw Pine(海菠蘿) and etc.





We took some photos with various rocks.



Mudstone



Sedimentary rocks

vii) Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve

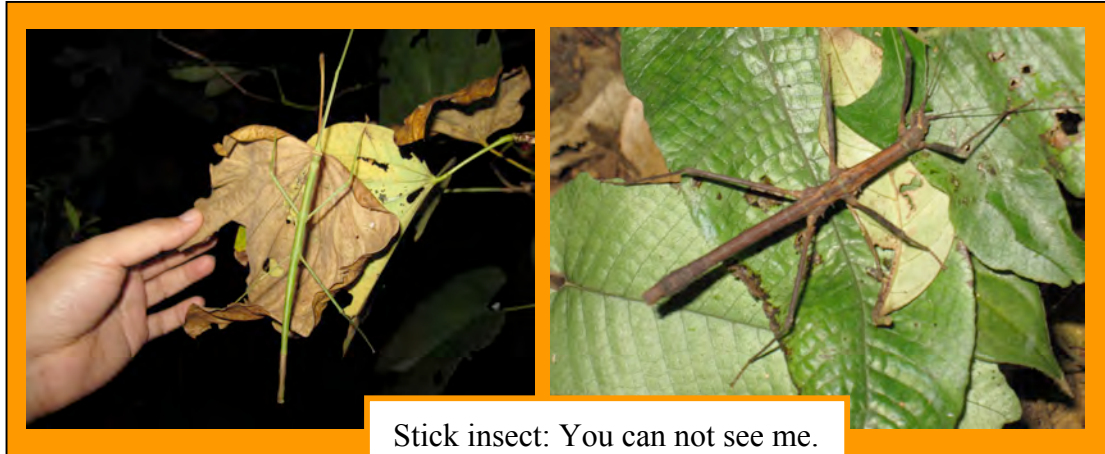
Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve is a historic plantation in Hong Kong. It is an excellent ecological environment of insects, birds and animals. Also, there are up to more than 100 kinds of tree species. Astonishingly, Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve is not located in the mountains or islands, it is near the Tai Po Market. So, it is a good place for family pastime.

In summer, Hong Kong is quite hot. So we suggest the visitors to visit Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve at night because the temperature is lower. The visitors can be comfortable to visit there. Also, we can find out fireflies. Some specials can found easily in there, for example, *Pyrocoelia* sp. (窗螢) and *Luciola* sp. (熠螢)



Besides, we discover some Firefly's larvae near the river and ground. On the way,

we also discover many Stick Insects on the leaves and branch. Stick Insects can be divided into 3 groups, stick insect, twig insect and leaf insect (no leaf insect in Hong Kong).



Stick insects are not moving like a bamboo and branch so we need some time to find it out.



On the other hand, we discover many toads and frogs in there. They hold a mini singing contest. "Croak" and "Kwaa" and "wa-a-a-a-ah"!

Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve is a paradise of insects and reptiles. It contains different species of insects. For example, *Lyssa zampa* (大燕蛾), spiders, Chinese gecko (中國壁虎), bees and etc.



Lyssa zampa (大燕蛾)



WOW! A big spider! It carries a cocoon.



A grasshopper



Bees: We came back



There are some eggs of Chinese gecko.

5.2.3 Green Transportation – Public Transport and Bicycle

i) Public Transport

Transportation service to and from suburban Tai Po can be really green as the attractions are so close to each other that most of them can be easily accessible by public transport.

To start off their green journey, visitors from all around HK can first take the Mass Transit Railway and alight at Tai Po Market Station. Just beside the exit they can find bus terminus, minibus stops and taxi stops taking them to different destinations. For instance, visitors can simply take 76B minibus (to San Mun Zai) and exit at Fung Yuen Road, and then walk for around 10 minutes to the main entrance of Fung Yuen Butterfly Conserve.



Taxi Stand



Minibus



Minibus station

ii) Traveling on Bicycle

Apart from public transport, visitors are strongly recommended to explore the district on a self-arranged bicycle tour and there are three reasons justifying our suggestion here:

- **Safe and Exotic**: The first reason is that Tai Po has actually been a popular cycling destination among local citizens for a long time. The well paved and facilitated bicycle routes make the bicycle excursion a **safe, exotic and enjoyable** experience for visitors.

- **Offset Carbon Emission**: Besides, traveling on bicycle is more preferable to other means of transport as according to “4 Principals for Choosing Green Transportation”, “Walking and cycling..... leaves the least amount of carbon footprint” and “are the most eco-friendly mode of transportation.”

- **Foster international understanding**: Most important of all, as suggested in <http://gogreentravelgreen.com>,

“the best part of traveling on bicycle is the opportunity to get to know the earth and her people in a much more intimate manner than any vehicle can allow.... There is something about the bikes that draws people toward us; that encourages people to reach out to us in ways they never would if we were in our own car. “

Here, we can see that bicycles can serve not only as a vehicle but also like a bridge linking up the locals and tourists, facilitating cultural interaction and *international understanding*. This is definitely in line with our interpretation of green tourism, ie., Green Tourism should not only be green to the environment but also green to the community and its people.



Cycling is regarded as the greenest form of transportation except for walking due to its low carbon emission.

5.2.4 Green Activities - Mr David Man's Theory of 5 Senses

Apart from the green environment and attractions in Tai Po, a lot of green tourism activities can be promoted and conducted in the district. For example, tourists can be encouraged to **shoot butterflies and plants with cameras**. By capturing the beautiful and natural moment of them, tourists will **marvel at the wonder of nature and learn to respect it and live with it in harmony.**

Besides, Mr David Man, Marketing Director of HK Discovery cum an educator in eco-tourism, has put forward his famous theory of experiencing Mother Nature not only with our eyes but with all our Five senses, through which we can enhance our sensitivity to nature. In consideration of the different attractions available in Tai Po, we try to examine how we can apply his theory to our study:-

Experiencing Mother Nature with our 5 Senses in Suburban Tai Po

Visitors can try to.....

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Sense of Vision | - Shoot beautiful butterflies in Fung Yuen and dragonflies in ShaLoTung with cameras and capture their most beautiful moments
- Observe the movements of crabs in the mudland of Ting Kok and identify the different species |
| 2. Sense of Hearing | - Listen to the sound of seawaves at the beach of Ting Kok
- Listen to the frogs roaming in Tai Po Kow Nature Reserve and imagine them performing in an orchestra late at night |
| 3. Sense of Smell | - Take a deep breath of the fishy smell in SanMunZsai Fishing Village and imagine what fishermen's life is like
- Take a deep breath of the herbal and grassy smell in Sha Lo Tong feeling refreshed and recharged |
| 4. Sense of Taste | - Taste the sun-dried seafood at San Mun Tsai Fishing village |
| 5. Sense of Touch | - Feel the roughness of rocks and wonder how they |

were formed millions of years ago

As we got inspired by what Mr Leon Lau, an veteran eco-tour guide said,

“Conservation first starts with appreciation.”

By learning to appreciate nature with our senses, we will get to be more emotionally attached to it and gradually the seed of conservation can be sown in our minds, thus achieving the aim of green tourism.



Mr David Man is both a globetrotter and a pioneer in green tourism education.

5.2.5 Green Education – SSSI

The six green attractions mentioned above not only serve to provide enjoyment but are ideal venues for green education/ It is because according to our research, four out of the six attractions mentioned before, namely Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve, Sha Lo Tong, Ting Kok and Ma Shi Chau have been declared "Site of Special Scientific Interest" by HK government.

What is SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) ?

Originated from Britain, the term SSSI"refers to a certain site (which may be terrestrial and/or marine) that is of prominent interest for its flora, fauna, geographical, geological or physiographic aspects, and thus is of special scientific interest.

In HK, SSSI was first adopted in Town Planning Ordinance in 1975. Currently, [there are altogether 64 SSSIs in Hong Kong](#).

Why do we need “SSSI”?

The listing of SSSIs is an administrative device to ensure that government departments are aware of the scientific importance of such sites and to ensure that they give due consideration to conservation when development in or near these sites are proposed. In considering whether a site should be recognised as a SSSI, the site or its features will be assessed on the following criteria:

- its uniqueness, naturalness or rarity in a territory-wide context
- its scientific value in a territorial or regional context
- whether it is representative or typical of its kind

Who is in charge of the registration of “SSSI”?

The Register of SSSI is kept by the Planning Department and can be inspected at the Planning Information Enquiry Counter.

What are the features of the attractions in Tai Po that give them the name “Site of Special Scientific Interest”?

Fung Yuen Butterfly Reserve (1980): The nursery place of butterflies and we can find more than half of the butterflies species in Hong Kong. Ample source of information about butterflies for teaching purpose

Sha Lo Tong (1997): The important habitat of dragonflies and life museum of Hakka culture.

Ting Kok (1985): Mangrove sites for teaching purposes.

Ma Shi Chau (1982): Geological phenomena for teaching purposes, including the ancient sedimentary rocks and fossils.

5.2.6 Green Gastronomy – Tai Po Farmers’ Market

On every Sunday morning from 9am to 5pm, local people and visitors cannot wait to head for the Tai Po Farmers' Market, a direct retail point selling organic vegetables and products which aims to promote an organic eating style and deepen consumers’ understanding of the advantages of organic farming.

How green is the food sold in this Market?

- 1) As the vegetables and fruits are all organic produces freshly grown without using chemical fertilizers or insecticides, the farming process will not cause harm to the soil and also the food is green and healthy enough by itself.
- 2) Besides, as the produces are grown locally in fertile valleys or organic farmlands nearby locally, this greatly reduces the carbon emission produced by transportation, when compared with other foodstuff imported overseas.
- 3) As the produces are sold by the farmer to the customers straight away, there is no middleman involved. The profit can go directly to the local farmers. This greatly helps to sustain the local farming industry and some traditional methods.



If green tourism is developed in suburban Tai Po, tourists can treat this market as a tourist attraction or consume the local food sold in there, which also means suburban Tai Po has the potential to offer green gastronomy to its tourists.

Green Economy – “Sea-Land Market” as a Social Enterprise

Located at the eastern end of the Tai Po Waterfront Park, the Sea-Land Market is a social enterprise under the Enhancing Self-Reliance through District Partnership Programme that opens to the public every Sunday. It carries two aims, ie.,

- 1) To improve the livelihoods and employment opportunity for fishermen, women and young people from the grass roots in the district
- 2) Preserve and promote the traditions of the old fishing industry which are all part of Tai Po’s history.

The Market comprises a “Sea Market” and a “Land Market”, with the former consisting of specially decorated boats which runs sight-seeing tours to Sam Mun Tsai, whereas the latter housing small booths selling traditional snacks and souvenirs. Cultural performances are arranged on special days.

The site is a green tourism attraction in the sense that it helps to preserve the local culture. We can see fishermen hold netting demonstrations and different models of fishing boats are displayed. At the same time, as the underprivileged groups are sponsored to start their own businesses, it brings revenue to the local community, while endeavouring to create the least impact on the environment.



Fishermen performing traditional dance in the market.

Chapter 6 Impacts brought about by Developing Green Tourism in Suburban Tai Po

6.1 Potential Positive Impacts Generated

The development of green tourism can indisputably bring about many benefits to different stakeholders like the nature environment, the community and it people:-

a) Giving a Boost to Local Economy

In the process of developing green tourism, we can not only enhance the environmental awareness of the visitors but the visitors will inevitably patronize some shops or restaurants like hiring bicycles or buying other necessities. Their arrivals in consequence will help to boost the community economy in the district.

Indeed, we have interviewed some local shop owners in San Mun Tsai Fishing Village and bicycle shopkeepers and asked about how they see our initiative of developing green tourist in their district. Most of them are in favour of the idea as they reflected that their incomes have actually increased slightly following the opening of HK National Geopark on Ma Shi Chau. (See below) This is mainly due to the fact that there have been more tourists patronizing them during the weekends.



Local small business stalls welcome the development of green tourism in Tai Po



Green Tourism can rejuvenate the local economy by bringing in more customers to the destinations.

b) Providing Incentives to Preserve Cultural and Natural Resources

As the development of green tourism involves much responsible capitalization of cultural and historical resources, the potential economic returns simply provides an incentive for the government or organizations concerned to invest more on the preservation of these assets. Take Ma Shi Chau as an example. In such a small fishing village, there are two education centres, namely Tai Po Geoheritage Centre and Fishermen's Life and Cultural Exhibition Centre erected there providing geological and cultural insights for tourists. As a result, the natural and cultural heritage and assets can be sustained and inherited.

c) Bringing about an Enhanced Sense of Cultural Pride and Identity

When the local residents see how their natural and cultural assets are admired by the foreign tourists, they will learn to appreciate the charm and uniqueness of their own district, whether it is the natural or cultural features. Gradually they will become more aware and proud of their own origin and their sense of cultural identity will be enhanced.

d) Facilitation of Cultural Interaction and International Understanding

With the district developed into a green attraction, local residents will have more chance to come into direct contact with tourists from all around the world, especially the explorers and drifters, in Cohen's definition, who are keen to experience the local culture on their own.

The casual chats and exchange of ideas between the two parties can help them open up another world for each other as they will learn to appreciate each other's traditions and customs and develop pride, respect and tolerance for the differences. Gradually, green tourism can help them develop friendship and positive attitudes towards each other, Negative stereotyping can be reduced and a better international understanding can be resulted.

e) **An Incentive for Improved Facilities and Environment for the Locals**

According to one of the shop owners we interviewed, tourism development in the district is most welcome as he has seen better facilities built and a more hygienic environment after the opening of National Geopark on Ma Shi Chau. For instance, the public toilets now have flushing facilities, which was not available in the past. The rubbish collection area is cleared and the streets swept more frequently now, all thanks to the fact that the Geopark is to be developed into a tourism destination.



This local resident expressed that there have been better toilets and facilities because of the National Geopark nearby.

f) **Enhancing Awareness of a Sustainable way of Life**

When the local residents are aware of the benefits like economic returns and enhanced sense of cultural pride brought about by green tourism developed in the district, they would get to realize the importance of preserving these cultural and natural assets. They will be more willing to adopt a sustainable way of life so as to hand down these heritage to the next generations.

6.2 *Potential Negative Impacts Generated*

Despite the benefits mentioned above, we must not overlook the fact that most of the attractions are still in their natural status. Therefore, if not taken good care of or capitalized upon in an irresponsible manner, some of the stakeholders' interests may be overlooked and some negative impacts may be caused as a result.

a) Unfavorable living environment for animals or plants caused by human activities

Animals and plants, like human beings need a pleasant, comfortable and unpolluted environment to reside in and grow healthily.

However, in the process of developing tourism in a certain place, whether it is green or not, a lot of human / tourist activities are bound to be involved. For civic-minded visitors, their walking, talking may cause disturbance to the animals and plants. In the case of some selfish visitors, they may even behave rudely, like throwing rubbish everywhere or stepping on the grass, turning the natural paradise into a trash site.

A real life is Fung Yuen, where a lot of young teenagers go to play war games on weekends nowadays. The noisy sound produced destroy the tranquility and threaten the butterflies' living. However, these resources are simply the assets of green tourism. Without them, green tourism simply can never flourish.



b) Direct Destruction of Ecology

Apart from the disturbance of the natural habitats of the wildlife, the survivals of the plants and animals are directly under threat, especially Tai Po Kau, which houses various kinds of flora and fauna, like trees, fireflies and birds. Since many of them live on a symbiotic relationship, like bees relying on flowers, many of them ,may go extinct if the environment is developed beyond control.

For example, some tourists actually will pluck flowers as ‘souvenirs’, and some will even catch some tiny animals like fireflies, however, what they are doing actually is destroying the normal ecology. Since the fireflies they caught maybe the leader of the fireflies, and without that, they may lose their organization and cannot take any move.



Some tourists destroyed the tree.

c) Disturbance to the Tranquil Lifestyle of the Local Community

Some of the destinations mentioned above like Ting Kok and Fung Yuen are quite near the residential areas, whereas San Mun Tsai is exactly a fishing village with hundreds of residents still living in it.

However, in the process of developing any form of tourism in the area, a lot more tourists will go there for visits, and a lot of human activities will be involved. This may affect the quiet and peaceful lifestyle the residents used to enjoy and they may be annoyed by the arrivals of these strangers. With a lack of regard for the interest of the local community, green tourism would be developed at the expense of the local residents' quality of life.

d) Possible frictions Between Visitors and Local Residents

Based on the findings of our research conducted in San Mun Tsai Fishing Village, frictions may arise between tourists and local residents over 1) shared use of land and 2) cultural Difference

1) Shared Use of Land

As there is a lack of parking lots for coaches and cars, it has been proposed that an additional area of land should be allocated to facilitate more parking space. Some elderly residents are reserved about this proposal as they are worried about the safety of their grandchildren.

2) Cultural Difference

One local resident expressed worries that the Fung Shui may be destroyed if there is too much construction work conducted in the fishing village. As residents may blame the tourists for the development work, confrontation and conflict of interest between the locals and tourists may arise

e) Negative Stereotypes towards Tourists caused by Carrying Capacity Problems

There is no place that can accommodate unlimited number of people. In other words, for every destination, there is a “carrying capacity”, which means the maximum number of individuals who can be supported in a given area within natural resource limits, and without degrading the natural social, cultural and economic environment for present and future generations. If that quota is exceeded, different problems will occur.

If the development for green tourism is not formulated and implemented with care in suburban Tai Po, the increased number of incoming tourist arrivals will inevitably add additional demand on social services and supporting infrastructures like public toilets or the time need to wait for public transport. Gradually, local residents may grow a negative feeling and even a sense of hostility towards tourists.

f) Disintegration of Indigenous Culture

Other than living condition, local culture may be affected if green tourism is promoted in those destinations. As a destination usually require facilities like hotels, tourist centers and restaurants, that may actually speed up the spread of modernization in those places. If the developers don't have the green sense to preserve the local culture, they may consider those cultural elements old and unfashionable and turn them into other tourism-supporting facilities like restaurants. In consequence, some indigenous cultures like the Hakka Village in Sha Lo Tung can no longer be sustained.



A local resident expressing worry that the development work may damage the “Fung Shui” of the Fishing village

Chapter 7 Potentials Problems Encountered in the Development of Green Tourism in Suburban Tai Po

To facilitate a whole comprehensive study of our proposed plan, we try to assess the difficulties we might encounter and have to overcome

a) Lack of Appropriate Accommodation Facilities in the Vicinity

After our extensive research, we find accommodation facilities for tourists in the district are far from adequate. Indeed, apart from a few guesthouses in the central district of Tai Po, there is only one youth hostel available for the accommodation of green tourists as introduced below.

Bradbury Jockey Club Youth Hostel (Tai Mei Tuk)

This hostel is close to Phoenix Garden, Ting Kok and San Mun Tsai Fishing Village, three of our 6 green attractions introduced and also the passing route to HK National Geopark.

However, the problem is this Youth Hostel only has 14 rooms with 72 beds available altogether (4 rooms for eight, 2 rooms for six, 6 rooms for four and 2 rooms for two). It will be hard to accommodate lots of tourists.

Location : Tai Mei Tuk, Tai Po

Tel : (852) 2662 5123

http://www.yha.org.hk/hostels.asp?lan=b5&id=HT_0000001



However, without sufficient supporting lodging facilities, it will be hard for green tourists to stay for a few more days in the district so as to explore the natural wonders and beauty of the suburban district. Green tourism is unlikely to flourish if we can't solve this problem.

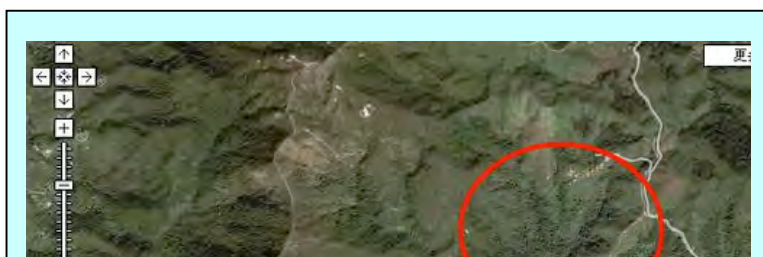
b) Conflicts between Property Development and Nature Conservation

Despite the rich natural assets promised by suburban Tai Po, development of green tourism in the district is not an easy task. It is because different property developers have also set an eye on the sparsely populated area of Tai Po, resulting in a scramble for land for profitable high-end private properties.

Case Study : The environment problem (Fung Yuen)

Outside the Fung Yuen Butterfly Conserve, there is a large piece of land bought by Cheung Kong Holdings, for property development uses. Indeed, a large residential project is in progress on the south of Fung Yuen, including 8 residential blocks and more than 200 independent villas.

Worse still, despite the opposition voices from environmental organizations like Tai Po Environmental Association, the developers evade the problem and only promised to set up a 50 meters buffer zone. According to some ecologists, the estate development of such a large scale will cause immeasurable ecological impact to the natural environment and residents living nearby with the vulnerable natural habitats of the butterflies being most severely affected.



Blue circle: the development site.

Red circle: Fung Yuen (SSSI) area.



c) Insufficient Professional Green Tour Operators and Guides

One important aim of green tourism is to increase tourists' understanding towards different natural resources, so that they can be motivated to preserve them. So

professional guidance from experienced tour operators and guides is very important.

However, it is undeniable that green tourism in HK, in many cases, is not as profitable as mass tourism simply because the tourists would not be pushed to do shopping or buying souvenirs! On the contrary, green tourism advocates that “visitors, during the journey, should take nothing away with them except memories”. Many tour operators and students studying tourism at university may not be interested to run real green business or work as a green tour guide.

d) Insufficient Monitoring of the Tour operators

Since green tourism is a relatively small market compared with mass tourism, a comprehensive monitoring system is yet to be developed. For instance, there are no professional guidelines stipulating the maximum number of visitors allowed in each tour, nor are there quality assurance of the tour guides’ qualifications. **If there is no mechanism guaranteeing the operation mode of the so-called “green” tours are really green enough, whether the ultimate goal of green tourism can be achieved remains an uncertainty.**

A Real Example of the Problem of Insufficient Monitoring

According to Mr Leon Lau, a veteran eco-tour guide, many green tours are actually seasonal as the attractions are confined by time constraints. For instance, visitors cannot see many migratory birds in Mai Po Nature Reserve after April since all the birds will have flown to the south.

In order to maximize their profits within the time limit, some so-called “green tour operators” simple accept as many visitors as they can, without considering whether the destination can accommodate such a large crowd of visitors or not.

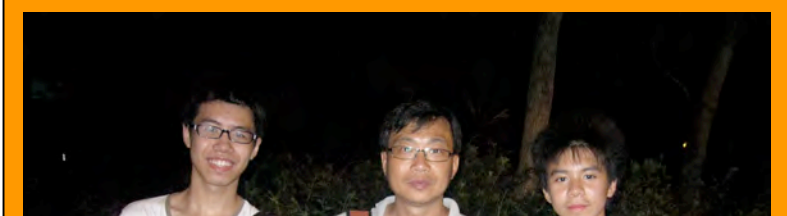
Indeed, Mr Lau has seen a crowd of over 200 visitors carried by coaches to Tai Po Kau going treasure-hunting fireflies on a Saturday Night. As there were too many people, the tour guide had to use loud-speakers. The torchlight, noise and appearance made by such a large number of visitors simply scared many insects and birds away.

Mr Lau 's tour got affected too as not many fireflies and other form of wildlife could be found and his visitors felt disappointed.

'It will be a lose-lose situation for the whole industry if this situation continues to go uncontrolled.'" Mr Lau remarked.



Mr Leon Lau was sharing his opinions about green tourism.



Mr Leon Lau
photos well

Chapter 8 Suggestions on How to Overcome the Problems

Since there are some limitations regarding our own itinerary and the development of green tourism in Hong Kong, we would like to make several suggestions to improve them.

8.1 For the Long-Development of Green Tourism in Hong Kong

a) Setting up of professional guidelines and a Licensing System

Now in Hong Kong, there are not specific professional guidelines formulated for the operation and management of green tours, so travel agents can simply design their own green tourism tours without too many restrictions. However, this also gives rise to the problem of lack of quality assurance.

In view of this loophole, we suggest TIC, i.e., the Tourism Industry Council, should look into the matter and issue guidelines in line with the green policy for the industry operators to follow. This can help standardize the quality of the green tours.

On the other hand, licenses can be issued to those tour operators and tour guides that have met the requirements of the green guidelines and renewed on a yearly basis subject to the past year's performance. With this quality assurance system, both tour operators and tour guides will learn to be self-disciplined and adhere to the green rules and regulations. At the same time, tourists will have full trust in the tourism products and professionalism and subject knowledge of the personnel they choose.

b) Collaboration with other Stakeholders for Formulation of Better Green Policies

In order that better green policies and strategies can be formulated and implemented smoothly, there must be better communication and collaboration between government departments (like Planning Department) and different stakeholders. For instance,

i) **With Hoteliers:** Regular meetings can be held with hoteliers so as to look into the possibility of building green hotels in suburban Tai Po or nearby districts. The key principle is the site should not be too close to the natural habitats and villages.

ii) **With Property Developers:** Before the implementation of any property projects on the natural areas, developers should give a wide berth from the conservation area, so that the natural habitats and rural villages will not get damaged.

iii) **With Environmental Groups:** Consultations with NGOs like Tai Po Environmental Association, Conservancy Association can help ensure that the interest of the indigenous creatures like plants and animals can be given full consideration before green light is given to any development plans that may threaten their living.

iv) **With Local Community:** Mutual respect and communication must be maintained with the local residents so that their interests and worries would be put into serious consideration, Representatives from the local community should also be invited to be committee members of development plans and sit in the meetings so that their voices can be fully heard.

c. Imitate the Management Mode of Mai Po Nature Reserve

According to Mr Leon Lau, a veteran eco tour guide in Tai Po, if we are to avoid the different carrying capacity problems and minimize the negative effects on the environment, the green tours should be organised in a more monitored and controlled manner. A good role model to follow suit is the management mode exercised by Mai Po Nature Reserve in HK.

Funded and managed by World Wide Fund, Mai Po Nature Reserve always endeavours to ensure a sustainable way of operation and management. For instance, there is an entrance fee and quota set for the no. of visitors admitted. i.e., a maximum

of 45000 visitors are allowed into the Reserve every year. This quota system helps to ensure that habitats like mangroves, fish ponds and wildlife won't be disturbed by the visits of large crowds of visitors.

Similarly, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department can co-ordinate and control the number of tours visiting a destination each day. For instance, there can be a schedule available for booking in advance. In case there are many tours flooding into a destination on a particular day, some of the tours can be advised to change to another date. Alternatively, different time slots can be allocated to the tours so that the places would not be overcrowded with visitors.

d) Learn from the Overseas Experience: Establishment of a Benchmarking and Certification System in HK

In order to encourage more tour operators and tour guides to go green, incentive is needed. The government and Tourism Industry Council can consider establishing a benchmarking system that can accredit the professionalism and quality of the green tour operators in HK, as in some overseas countries.

A prominent example to learn from is “Green Globe”, renowned as **“the Premier Global Certification for Sustainability.” Originally founded in the UK in 1993, the organization provides its members with updated certification criteria on sustainability services like ISO/IEC 17021 and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), which is the agreed international standard for the sustainable operation and management of travel and tourism businesses to follow. The members can thus measure their own performance and see whether they have complied to the international green standard in the way they run their business or design their tourism products, etc.**

We are honoured to have interviewed Mr Charles Lee, founder of hktraveler.com Ltd, the first travel agency in HK that has been accredited with the certification.

Date: 21 June 2010

Venue: Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurant, APM, Kwun Tong

Interviewer: Tom Chan and Brando Tang (T&B)

Interviewee: Mr Charles Lee (C)

Excerpt of our interview:

T&B: Congratulations on your company being the first in HK to have accredited with the certification. Can you tell me something about the process of certification and what requirements you have to meet?

C: There is a long and complicated procedure involved which is quite difficult to explain. However, apart from the green elements of our tours, we also have to apply green policy in our office management like using both sides of the paper, turning off lights when they are not in use.....



Benchmarks assessed by Earthcheck



Report endorsed by Green Globe



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An Australian Government Initiative



GREEN GLOBE



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Chapter 9 Conclusion

In this research, we tried to explore what green tourism is actually all about and then have a fair assessment of all the green potentials suburban Tai Po is endowed with. We conducted interviews with experts and members of the green tourism industry and opinions of other stakeholders like local residents and tourists were put into consideration. We also made a few attempts to apply concepts and theories we learnt from our textbooks to our case study

At the end of this project, we are proud to share our findings here, i.e., green tourism is a fact but not a fad in HK as there are districts and attractions promising great potentials for development. Moreover, we have predecessors developing it (though without his own knowing) more than 40 years ago!

In the process of development, new attractions have been explored and developed but problems are generated at the same time. As these problems may involve complexities and conflict of interests among different stakeholders, it really takes time and effort for people to fully realize the importance of green tourism and its implications to the sustainability of our natural environment and general well-being of our society.



Chapter 10 Reflections

10.1 Reflection of Chan Chi Mun, Tom

First of all, I would like to show my biggest thanks to my Tourism & Hospitality Studies teacher, Miss Tammy Lee Siu Fung, for her sincere support and guidance. And I would also like to thank my fellow group mate, Tang Yu Hin, for his big help and innovative ideas. Without them, this project can never be done.

Secondly, I have gained a lot in this project, as this enabled me a chance to explore the nature beauty of Tai Po, which I had never seen before, I will definitely preserve the nature there since it's so awesome. Besides, I have also learnt to consider every stakeholders' interests when promoting a form of tourism, this is really necessary since everyone have different needs. If their needs are overlooked, they may be very unsatisfied and the whole thing will be spoiled.

Thirdly, I have learnt a lot more about green tourism in Hong Kong, as this form of tourism is too fashionable, it's so hard for us to find a accurate definition. Before doing this project, I really didn't know Mr. Walter Chu is the one who started a similar form of tourism as green tourism. He is actually the forerunner. And I also got to know a lot of realistic facts about local travel agents, and their views towards green tourism, these are really valuable information.

All in all, I think this project is an excellent opportunity for me to expand my horizons to Hong Kong and green tourism, and to interview so many professional people is really a great experience for me.



10.2 Reflection of Tang Yu Hin, Brando

Firstly, I have learnt a lot in this project. I was astonished that Tai Po has many green attractions and natural resources. And Tai Po made me more aware of our relationship with the environment and the need to bring about positive changes in Hong Kong through conservation and education to. Also, I have learnt how to preserve the harmony of nature. For example, I need to let nature grow in my heart and take only photographs and leave only footprints.

Secondly, I discovered that many natural resources in Tai Po were destroyed by some human. It enhanced my awareness of natural and cultural conservation on a local and global scale. Besides, I think Tai Po is a potential place to develop green tourism or eco tourism. The excursions and site visits have provided an unforgettable outdoor experience for me.

At last, I would like to say thanks to my Tourism & Hospitality Studies teacher, Miss Tammy Lee Siu Fung. She gave many priceless and valuable opinions to our group. Also, I would also like to thank my fellow group mate, Tom, Chan Chi Mun. He gave great ideas in this project and encouraged me to try my best.

I think doing this project proposal can enrich my knowledge. I am much honored to be able to participate in this project. It is a great experience for me.



Chapter 11 Appendices

Appendix 1

Questions for interview with Mr Walter Chu

Appendix 2

Questions for interview with Mr Charles Lee

Appendix 3

Letter to Public Relations Department of TVB

無線電視公關部的同事:

您們好! 我們是兩位就讀觀塘官立中學中四級的學生, 現正修讀旅遊及款待科.

我們最近參加了一項與有關本港綠色旅遊的專題研究比賽. 如獲獎的話, 將有機會和老師一同代表香港, 到德國出席一個學術交流會議, 與其他國家的與會者交流當地綠色旅遊的發展情況. 因此我們雖在考試期間, 仍在努力搜集資料.

我倆素仰 貴台資深藝員 朱維德 先生除演技精湛外, 於本港本地遊方面亦素有心得, 資歷深厚, 尤其是在香江名勝及奇景方面更著有力作. 希望朱先生能撥冗 接受我們訪問, 但不知如何可聯絡到 朱先生,

不知 貴台 公關部 可否代為安排? 有勞之處, 我們不勝感激, 並定當於專題報告上鳴謝 貴台 及 朱先生的幫忙.

如有疑問, 可致電 92423065與我們聯絡. 謝甚.

鄧宇軒, 陳志滿 謹啟

2010年6月16日

Appendix 4

What is Carrying Capacity?

Carrying capacity refers to the number of individuals who can be supported in a given area within natural resource limits, and without degrading the natural social, cultural and economic environment for present and future generations. The carrying capacity for any given area is not fixed. It can be altered by improved technology, but mostly it is changed for the worse by pressures which accompany a population increase.

There are **three** types of carrying capacity problems:

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a) **Physical carrying capacity problems**

It is related to

- i) whether the infrastructure like road, water supply, electricity supply and drainage is sufficient for tourism development.
- ii) whether the capacity of tourism facilities, such as car parking spaces or seats in restaurants are enough.
- iii) whether the capacity of transport system can support the influx of visitors.

b) **Environmental carrying capacity problems**

It is related to whether

- i) there is excessive trampling on grassland at picnic sites
- ii) there is disturbance to wildlife
- iii) there is physical erosion, caused by excessive trampling of important historic monuments .

c) **Psychological carrying capacity problems**

This depends on

- a) visitors' attitude to both the number and behavior of other users like over crowdedness and noisy environment
- ii) visitors' tolerance of environmental pollution and physical damage at a tourist destination. Psychological carrying capacity is exceeded when the visitors' enjoyment is significantly damaged.

<http://www.carryingcapacity.org/>

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