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Thema

Transnational tourism after the opening of the borders

A case study from northeastern Thailand and southern Laos

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Summary

After the opening of the borders to formerly communist countries in Southeast Asia, new opportunities have emerged for transnational tourism, combining the highlights of the Southeast Asian countries into touristic programs. This has changed remarkably the situation in some remote areas that previously enjoyed little or no tourism. This dissertation analyzes the transformations in two of these formerly remote areas: the northeastern part of Thailand (I-san) and the southern part of Laos near the border to Cambodia, an area which had remained largely untouched by tourism until the borders between the communist countries of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and the more western-oriented Thailand began to become increasingly open. The study investigates developments and possibilities for transnational tourism in the two chosen study areas and describes how tourism development in these areas has taken different paths due to different socio-political circumstances in Thailand and Laos, in addition to the globalisation of both tourism destinations and tourists. The characteristics of the two studied areas and their respective tourism destinations are described, with a focus on the aspects of accessibility and connectivity before and after the opening of the borders. The results show that based on their similarities and differences, I-san and southern Laos attract different tourist groups. In particular, two distinct ways of “doing tourism” can be distinguished: one for Asian tourists (mostly Thais), and one for international tourists, who mainly come from Europe, North America and Australia. The development and structure of the two sub-segments of tourism are analyzed through a quantitative survey of perceptions and preferences of tourists on one hand and qualitative interviews with tourism stakeholders on the other. The empirical results show three different aspects: (1) the differences in perceptions, expectations and demands in the main visitor groups, (2) the strategies of tourism stakeholders, which take different preferences of Thai and international tourists into account in planning their offers and (3) future scenarios of tourism development in northeastern Thailand and southern Laos and the possibilities for private and government agencies to improve sustainable forms of tourism that contribute to the prosperity of the region. Overall, this study illustrates an initial phase of transnational tourism and the development in the two similar regions, it presents the profile of tourists who have visited northeastern Thailand and southern Laos and suggests possi-

bilities for further development of the respective tourism destinations based on preference, valuations and ratings from tourists.

Zusammenfassung

Die Öffnung der Grenzen zu den früher kommunistischen Ländern in Südostasien hat neue Möglichkeiten für den transnationalen Tourismus in Südostasien eröffnet, die touristischen Highlights der einzelnen Länder in länderübergreifenden Touren miteinander zu verknüpfen. Dadurch hat sich insbesondere die Situation solcher Gebiete verändert, die bislang aufgrund ihrer Nähe zu undurchlässigen Grenzen im Windschatten der touristischen Entwicklung lagen und nun von der Öffnung der Grenzen zwischen Laos, Kambodscha, Vietnam und dem stärker westlich orientierten Thailand profitieren. Die Dissertation untersucht vor diesem Hintergrund aktuelle Transformationen in zwei dieser bislang touristisch peripher gelegenen Gebiete, dem Nordosten Thailands und dem Süden von Laos. Ziel der Arbeit ist es, die Entwicklungen und Potentiale des transnationalen Tourismus in diesen zwei Regionen zu erklären. Sie beschreibt, wie sich der Tourismus in Nordost-Thailand und Süd-Laos entlang unterschiedlicher Pfade entwickelt hat, die sowohl von den jeweiligen sozio-politischen Rahmenbedingungen, als auch von Globalisierungsprozessen und den Erwartungen und Praktiken der Besucher beeinflusst sind. Dazu werden zunächst die zwei Untersuchungsgebiete und ihre jeweiligen touristischen Ziele beschrieben und ihre Erreichbarkeit und Verkehrserschließung vor und nach Öffnung der Grenzen diskutiert. Dabei zeigt sich, dass Nordost-Thailand und Süd-Laos jeweils unterschiedliche Typen von Touristen anziehen. Insbesondere lassen sich in Süd-Laos zwei distinkte touristische Teilmärkte voneinander unterscheiden: einer für asiatische, v.a. thailändische Touristen, einer für internationale Touristen, die aus westlich geprägten Ländern Europas, Nord-Amerikas und Australiens kommen. Die Entstehung und Struktur dieser zwei unterschiedlichen touristischen Teilmärkte wurde mit Hilfe einer quantitativen Befragung zu Sichtweisen, Praktiken und Präferenzen von Touristen und qualitativen Interviews der Anbieter untersucht. Auf der Basis dieser empirischen Erhebungen diskutiert die Arbeit drei Aspekte: (1) die unterschiedlichen Vorstellungen, Erwartungen und Wahrnehmungen der unterschiedlichen Touristen, (2) die Strategien der Tourismus-Anbieter, die sich an den Vorstellungen der jeweiligen Zielgruppe orientieren und (3) zukünftige Entwicklungsszenarios des Tourismus in Nordost-Thailand und Süd-Laos und die Möglichkeiten für private und staatliche Akteure, nachhaltige Formen von Tourismus zu fördern, die der Gesamtentwicklung der jeweili-

gen Zielgebiete zu Gute kommen. Insgesamt stellt die Arbeit damit die Initialphase des transnationalen Tourismus in zwei Untersuchungsregionen dar, schildert die Nachfrageprofile der Besucher in Nordost-Thailand und Süd-Laos und schlägt auf der Basis der Präferenzen und Einschätzungen der Besucher Möglichkeiten für eine weitere Entwicklung vor.

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List of Abbreviations

ACMECS	Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
EWEC	East-West Economic Corridor
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LNTA	Lao National Tourism Administration
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
NTA	National Tourism Authority
OEC	Office of the Educational Council
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
R&R	Rest and Recreation
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SAS	Scandinavian Airlines System
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TAC	Thai Airways Company
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
THB	Thai Baht
TOT	Tourist Organization of Thailand
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

US	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1 Introduction



1.1 Setting the scene – Transnational tourism and the opening of the borders between Thailand and its neighboring countries

1.1.1 Thailand

For decades Thailand has been a country known for its beaches, resorts and fascinating landscapes. The country is one of the touristic hotspots in Southeast Asia and even after the devastating events of the tsunami in 2004, the number of tourists visiting Thailand continues to rise year by year. The old days when Thailand was a destination only for American soldiers enjoying the Rest and Recreation program (R & R) of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, followed by the arrival of backpackers and pioneer tourists are now long gone. In 2012 the number of international tourists arriving in Thailand exceeded 19.7 million¹ in total. Whether they are holiday makers, adventurers, pensioners, medical or sex tourists, the motives and demands of people coming to Thailand are manifold.

Since the late 19th century, Thailand has experienced a continuing economic boom. However, there have been significant differences in development between the different regions of the country. A polarization between the urban centers and the rural regions

¹ Immigration Bureau, Police Department, primary data update 07.12.2012.

can be observed. Thus, some provinces remained peripheral and – compared to central Thailand – ‘underdeveloped’: *“Bangkok had become the pre-eminent focus of economic activity, political decision-making and both public and private investment (in this respect, every region is marginal to Bangkok; it is just that the north-east is more marginal than any other)”* (Parnwell/Rigg, 1996, 223). This situation of economic remoteness within the country was intensified during the time of the Cold War, and the I-san (northeastern Thailand) became a ‘*dead end street*’ in terms of transportation, infrastructure, and economic development. The borders to the neighboring countries were closed to both the movement of people as well as economic goods.

Since the late 1960’s, tourism has become the central sector of the Thai economy. However the uneven development of the country was also reflected in the development of tourism. Not every part of the country was involved in the extensive boom of tourism (Parnwell/Rigg, 1996, 215). First of all the northeastern Thailand (I-san region) has always been regarded as being in suspension due to its remote geographical location near to the Cambodian and Lao borders. In addition, the I-san region is characterized by poor environmental conditions such as infertile soils, unpredictable climate, periodic flooding and droughts.

1.1.2 Laos - off the beaten tracks

Laos, in common with neighboring countries (i.e. Vietnam and Cambodia) was the scene of the proxy war between the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The historical background of the region led to a policy of partition and thus to the political as well as economic seclusion of the region. In contrast to its southern neighbor, Laos neglected the increasing tourism to Southeast Asia which set in during the 1960’s (Hopfinger, 2007, 719). The communist country of Laos had stopped almost all international affairs and economic cooperation with other countries (see chapter 2.4). One result was that there were only a few international tourists visiting Laos. The only people who visited Laos at that time were diplomatic representatives or employees of international organizations, which came mostly from other communist countries (Phabouddy et al., 2010). In general, Laos had been dependent on economic support from many international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank and Asian Development Bank since its independence from France in 1949 (Seidenfaden, 1927, 4). During this time there were hardly any international tourists visiting Laos. The

example of Vang Vieng illustrates this situation. Vang Vieng district is nowadays a famous destination for tourists. However, the district had been less popular among tourists prior to 1994. Initially, only Lao tourists, mainly returnees visiting their families in Laos, and only a few international tourists visited the place. Accessibility to the district was inconvenient due to the bad conditions of the road system within the country (Sosamphanh et al., 2012). In 1996 tourism facilities and services were provided in the Vang Vieng district for the first time and one year later a new record of tourist arrivals was recorded. This was a result of the process of political opening.

1.1.3 The opening of the borders

Since the end of the Cold War there were significant political changes that led to a process of rapprochement between the countries in Southeast Asia (Seidenfaden, 1927). One important result was the opening of the borders of Thailand towards the neighboring communist countries, in particular Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. In recent years the political and economic relations between these countries have been decisively intensified and have become an increasing factor for the economic development within the ASEAN region (Pholsena, 2010, 462). The opening of the borders within southeast Asia have had a large impact, i.e. on Laos, which is increasingly being connected to international road networks and can now be regarded as a *land-linked* country. Since the year 2000, there has been large investment in the road network throughout the country². This situation has decisively changed economic development during the last decades. Similar impacts of the opening up process could be observed in northeastern Thailand. *“Since the days of the Vietnam War this part of the country has developed, step by step, to become an integrated part of the Thai national economic system with a new elaborate road network and other technical infrastructure such as dams and hydro-power stations. With the opening of the borders to the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia, new international relations have been established, especially in regard to economic activities (e.g. transnational electricity networks) and transnational tourism”* (Gebhardt, 2004, 1). In addition, the political changes described above had a considerable impact on the development of tourism in these regions which had previously been ignored by the tourists. Due to the opening of the borders traveling across the Southeast Asian countries

² United Nations Report: <http://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/ldc/shared/Laos%20PDR.pdf> (accessed on 09.01.2013).

became possible for the very first time. A new phenomenon of transnational tourism set in because border-crossing had become much easier than before (Timothy, 1999, 182) (Sofield, 2006, 117).

1.1.4 The transnationalization of tourism in Southeast Asia

Besides the official permission for tourists to cross the borders between the countries, the development of the road network was crucial for the emergence of transnational tourism. Of particular importance for tourism in the I-san region, as well as southern Laos, have been the Mekong River bridges which became the major gateways between the two countries³. Moreover there was an increasing political awareness of the potential of the tourism sector.



Fig. 1: Travel tour of the German tour operator Rotel Tours through Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam

(Source: <http://www.rotel.de/katalog-2014/reise-details/077a.html>)

³ The Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge in Nong Khai province was the first international bridge across the Mekong River. The bridge was built jointly by the governments of Australia, Thailand and Laos. It was opened in 1994.

The Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA), for example, started to promote touristic highlights such as ancient towns or the natural landscape, which were included in the World Heritage List⁴. In the south, near to the Cambodian border, there is Khonapheng, the largest waterfall, by volume, in Southeast Asia. There are twenty one, national protected areas selected to be established for ecotourism.

These improvements to the infrastructure, over recent years, have led to new possibilities for transnational tourism. In particular, new travel routes that combine the tourism highlights of Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand have been made possible and are increasingly being used by international tourists (see Fig.1). The situation of the remote areas has especially been changed significantly due to the new phenomenon of transnational tourism. That is the case with both the I-san region and southern Laos, the two focus regions of this study.

1.2 The research interests and research questions

In the past, border regions have in many areas of the world been considered as remote areas with a lack of accessibility and restricted opportunities for economic development compared to the rest of a respective country (Sofield, 2006, 109). In the course of globalisation this situation, however, has changed increasingly. A growth in movements and interrelations including goods, information, ideas and people could be observed (Prokkola, 2008, 33). The opening of national borders which leads to improve accessibility due to the extension of transportation systems has integrated border regions and induced both political as well as economic changes. As outlined above, Southeast Asia, including Thailand and Laos, experienced such a process of opening. There has been a movement towards *transnational*, and *cross-border* regional development that emerged at the turn of the millennium. One important factor that influenced the development of these border regions has been the tourism sector (Anaman/Ismail, 2002, 65). Moreover, enhanced frontier development represented a new trend which was seen as promising growth opportunities for international tourism (Sofield, 2006, 115). But what are the major changes after the opening of the borders between Thailand and Laos? What are

⁴ One example is the ancient town of Luang Prabang which was included to the World Heritage List in 1995. Thirty-two Buddhist monasteries as well as the whole French colonial city were put under monumental protection.

the general developments and what changed with regard to the new phenomenon of transnational tourism in Southeast Asia?

The following dissertation deals with the developments of the tourism sector in north-eastern Thailand and southern Laos which experienced a significant change in the last decade. These two regions were chosen because of their former situation as *dead end streets* which were not included in the tourism system. But in recent years this situation changed. The overall objective of this study is to understand the dynamics and changes of transnational tourism in southern Laos and the I-san region in northeastern Thailand. To achieve this goal, a profile of tourists that have visited the northeastern part of Thailand and southern Laos was derived. An additional aim was to explore the type of tourism that takes place in the study regions as well as the preferences, evaluations and demands of the tourists. There are two main groups of tourists in South East Asia: international tourists from mostly western countries (e.g. Europe, USA, Australia) and regional tourists mostly from Thailand and recently also from China. This case study includes both groups and tries to compare the aims, expectations and the travel behavior of these two target groups and furthermore attempts to understand how the tourism sector in Thailand (with a long-time experience in tourism) and Laos (with its recently emerging industry sector) reacts with regard to the demands of these two groups. In order to examine possibilities for future tourism developments at the respective destinations, this study includes both the demand side and the supply side of the tourism sector. This leads to the research questions of this study:

1. *What are the differences in the development of tourism that can be observed in northeastern Thailand and southern Laos?*
2. *How do the main visitor groups differ within the study area?*
3. *What differences in the perceptions, expectations and demands of the different types of tourists can be observed? More particularly, what differences are indicated between the Thai and the western tourists?*
4. *What effects do the differences in the demands of different types of tourists have on the supply of tourism infrastructure?*

1.3 Structure of the study

In the following section the structure of this thesis is presented. After this introduction (chapter 1.1 to 1.3) which gives an overview of the research topics of the dissertation presented here, *Chapter two* takes a closer look at the tourism phenomenon in Southeast Asia. It shows the figures, trend and tourism situation from those numbers (chapter 2.1). Moreover it examines the role of tourism as major factor of the economic development in general (chapter 2.3) and in particular focusing on both study areas in northeastern Thailand (chapter 2.5) and southern Laos (chapter 2.6). Due to political changes the economic situation in the region changed considerably in the last decades. The countries had recovered from the barren time of the Vietnam War and started to generate revenues in particular from the tourism sector. This impact of the political change on the development of the tourism is therefore an integral part of chapter two.

The subsequent chapter (*Chapter three*) presents the theoretical approaches and framework of the study. First the past developments and future trends of the relatively recent scientific discipline of tourism geography are presented (chapter 3.1). This thesis make a contribution to the understanding of the nexus of tourism and economic development and therefore it builds upon the theoretical approach of the economic concepts of tourism geography in terms of demand and supply, which will be explained in chapter 3.2. In chapter 3.3 then, the analytical framework on transnational tourism which frames this study will be introduced.

Chapter four presents the research design (chapter 4.1), the selection of the research sites (chapter 4.2) and the methodology of the study which consists of both quantitative as well as qualitative empirical research methods (chapter 4.3 and 4.4). The quantitative part consists of a comprehensive survey with questionnaires, in which both Thai as well as international tourists were questioned about their preferences, travel routes and individual backgrounds. Meanwhile, the qualitative part of the study, in-depth interviews with stakeholders and agents from the tourism sector were conducted.

The empirical results of this study are presented in the following chapters starting with *Chapter five* which describes the characteristics and the context of the research areas (Thailand and Laos). Their respective tourism destinations and potentials are presented. Here an explanation is given about the cultural similarities and differences which existed between the I-san region (northeastern Thailand) and Laos and what both locations

have to offer in terms of attractions for national as well as international tourists (chapter 5.1). In addition to that the different stakeholder and types of tourism which developed since the opening of the borders are outlined in chapter 5.2.

Chapter six then highlights the aspect of access for tourism development and illustrates the situational accessibility and connectivity in Thailand, Laos and their neighboring countries before and after the opening of the borders and discusses their potential and already visible impacts on the development of transnational tourism. This chapter answers the following research question: *What are the differences in the development of tourism that can be observed in northeastern Thailand and southern Laos?*

The subsequent chapters (*Chapter 7 and 8*) comprise the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study and discuss the findings and results of the research. The analysis of the quantitative data (questionnaires) results in two samples which are presented here, on the one hand, regarding the international tourists and on the other hand, national or regional tourists mainly from Thailand. *Chapter eight* then analyzes the (marketing) strategies of tourism stakeholders. The focus of this part of the study is on the two research questions: *How do the main visitor groups differ within the study area? What differences in the perceptions, expectations and demands of the different types of tourists can be observed? More particularly, what differences are indicated between the Thai and the western tourists?*

The discussion and conclusion in *Chapter nine* will bring the analysis and findings of this study together against the background of the previous chapters. The main focus will relate to the following research question: *What effects do the differences in the demands of different types of tourists have on the supply of tourism infrastructure?*

Finally, in the conclusion, the overall results and findings will be highlighted. It further summarizes the profiles of the tourists that visited the northeastern part of Thailand and southern Laos in order to conclude from their evaluations and behavior on possible developments and future perspectives of tourism in the region. These future scenarios on tourism in northeastern Thailand and southern Laos could contribute to the development of measures and policy recommendation in order to improve the manner and sustainability of tourism in the region.

2 Tourism as a key factor of economic development

As tourism has long been recognized for its major contribution to economic growth, many countries have continuously promoted the tourism sectors over the years, undertaking several strategies to foster the development of tourism. The following chapters represented how tourism being a key factor of economic development in Southeast Asia.

2.1 Figures and trends

Over the past decades, tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors of the world (Pearce, 2001) (UNWTO, 2009, Zhang et al., 2009). The table (Fig.2) shows that the growth of international arrivals from 1950 to 2010 worldwide followed a considerable positive trend. According to this data provided by the World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals have shown uninterrupted growth from 25 million in 1950, to 940 million in 2010. International tourist arrivals grew by nearly 7% in 2010 and US\$ 919 billion (€ 693 billion) in economic revenues were generated through the tourism sector.

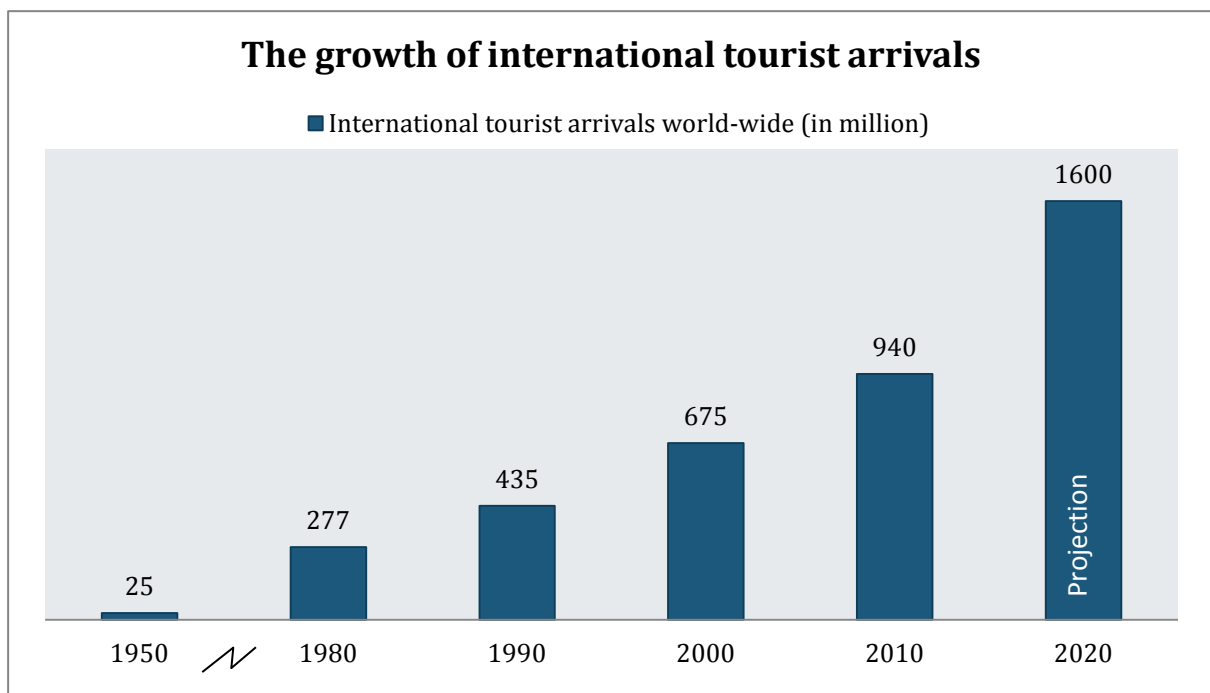


Fig. 2: The growth of international tourism from 1950 to 2010
(Source: own draft, data base UNWTO 2010)

“As an internationally traded service, inbound tourism has become one of the world’s major trade categories. The overall export income generated by inbound tourism including passenger transport, exceeded US\$ 1 trillion in 2010, or close to US\$ 3 billion a day. Tourism export accounts for as much as 30% of the world’s export of commercial services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. Globally, as an export category, tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products. For many developing countries it is one of the main sources of foreign exchange income and the number one export category, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development” (UNWTO, 2011, 2).

The quotation above from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows the importance of the tourism sector for the economic development. Further the UNWTO forecasts a growth in international tourist arrivals of between 4% and 5% in the years to come and by 2020 international arrivals are expected to reach 1.6 billion (see Fig.2). However these tourist arrivals and trends are not evenly distributed and vary over the time and geographical region. The total tourist arrivals by region (see Fig. 3) show that by 2020 the top three receiving regions will be Europe (717 million tourists), East Asia and the Pacific (397 million) and the Americas (282 million), followed by Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

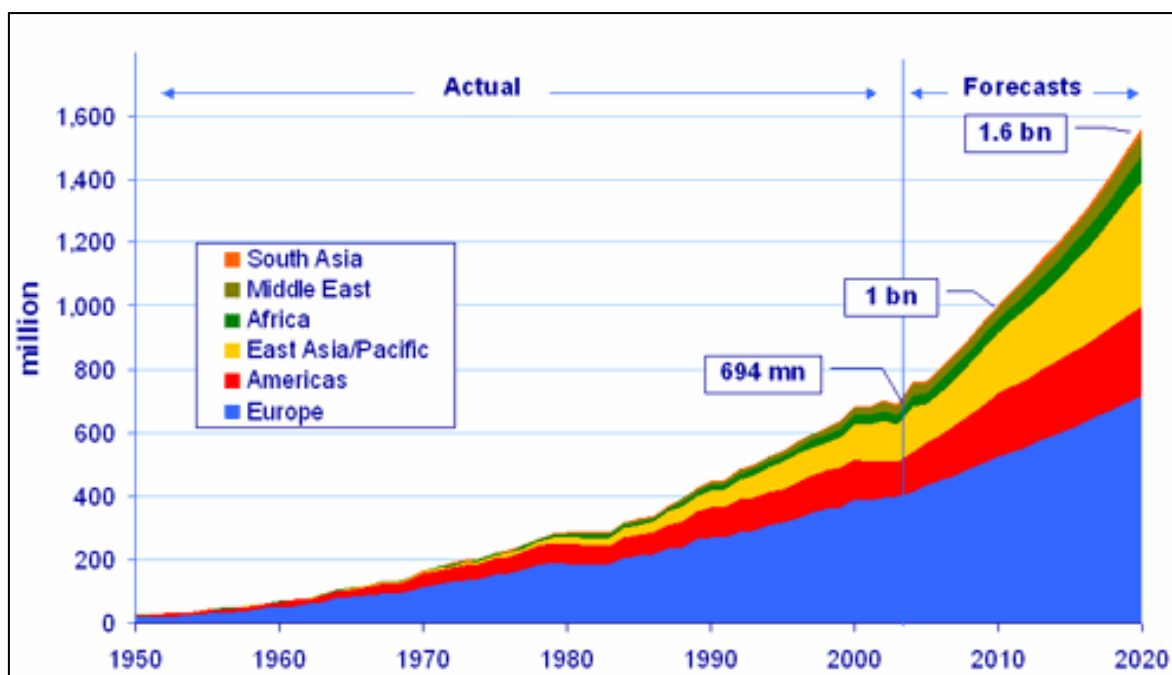


Fig. 3: Regional differentiation of tourism arrivals.

(Source: UNWTO, <http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/vision.htm> (accessed on 28.12.2012))

However East Asia and the Pacific, Asia, the Middle East and Africa are forecasted to grow at relatively higher rates of more than 5% year, compared to the world average of 4.1%. Europe and the Americas, on the other hand, are anticipated to show a growth of tourism arrivals which is below average rates. Europe still maintained the highest share of world arrivals, although there will be a decline from 60 per cent in 1995 to 46% by 2020 (see Fig.3).

Table 1: Tourism forecasts, market shares and growth rate by regions
(Source: <http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/vision.htm> (accessed on 28.12.2012))

	Base Year	Forecasts		Market share (%)		Average annual growth rate (%)
	1995	2010	2020	1995	2020	1995-2020
	(Million)					
World	565	1006	1561	100	100	4.1
Africa	20	47	77	3.6	5.0	5.5
Americas	110	190	282	19.3	18.1	3.8
East Asia and the Pacific	81	195	397	14.4	25.4	6.5
Europe	336	527	717	59.8	45.9	3.1
Middle East	14	36	69	2.2	4.4	6.7
South Asia	4	11	19	0.7	1.2	6.2

These trends and figures indicate that tourism is an important factor of development especially in developing countries and emerging economies (i.e. those which are on the way to a fully diversified economy). Thailand for instance has experienced a tremendous growth in tourism over several decades, including good and bad experiences (see chapter 2.3). The importance of tourism for developing countries lies in its far reaching economic effects. Throughout the world, tourism has been one of the most significant economic activities for decades (Pearce/Butler, 2002, 1). It combines services in the sectors of transportation, accommodation, gastronomy, and entertainment. But also the supply industry is involved and can profit from positive developments of tourism. Hence tourism generates a large amount of income and demand for goods and services and creates

further opportunities for employment in the services associated⁵ with tourism. For many developing countries who are mainly focused on tourism this sector is vital for the economy⁶ (Mekong Institute, 2008, 20-21).

“The significant numbers indicate that the contribution of tourism to economic activity worldwide is estimated at 5% approximately. Tourism’s contribution to employment tends to be slightly higher relatively and is estimated in the order of 6-7% of the overall number of jobs worldwide (direct and indirect)”⁷ (UNWTO, 2010).

Due to this more and more countries have realized that tourism can make a major contribution to economic growth. This also applies to peripheral, disadvantaged regions, where tourism is often regarded as the only feasible option for job creation, economic upturn, and poverty reduction. This aspect will be scrutinized in this study focusing on the I-san region as well as Laos. Tourism, as a service-oriented sector, is on the one hand one of the most labor intensive industries while on the other hand, it generates jobs on different qualification levels, ranging from low or medium qualification to highly qualified personnel. Most importantly it gives the opportunity to involve people with a lower level of education and training and provides a new source of income. Due to this reason tourism plays a crucial role for economic development especially in developing countries (Bayer et al., 2007, 6) . Over the time, an increasing number of nations have opened up (e.g. Laos, see chapter 2.4) and invested in tourism development, turning modern tourism into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprise infrastructure development and the generation of foreign currencies (UNWTO, 2011, 2). Some authors describe tourism as a resource which can be traded internationally, but not as a commodity like the others: *“Tourism’s ‘product’ is intangible and invisible. Commodities such as tea and coffee are easily definable and tangible. Tourism, however, is a multisectoral service activity, incorporating many diverse service functions and overlapping with many different sectors, such as transport and agriculture. As a ‘product’ it is intangible. It is an invisible export trade item, the raw material of which is*

⁵ These services include transportation such as airlines and cruises, hospitality and foodservice such as accommodation including hotels, resorts and restaurants, entertainment venues such as amusement parks, casinos, shopping malls, music venues, theatres and include promotion campaign, exhibition and trade show organizers etc..

⁶ Proceedings: Capacity Building Workshop on Tourism in Greater Mekong Subregion using Open Education Resources 17-21 March 2008.

⁷ http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/highlights/UNWTO_Highlights10_en_LR.pdf (accessed on 01.09.2011).

the living organism and dynamic of people (generally called 'hosts'), cultures and natural resources" (Cleverdon/Kalisch, 2000, 176). Hence, the contribution of tourism to economic well-being depends on these cultural and natural resources and on the quality and type of tourism being offered. The UNWTO assists destination regions to develop a sustainable model of tourism and supports the positioning in ever more complex national and international markets. *"As the UN agency dedicated to tourism, UNWTO points out that particularly developing countries stand to benefit from sustainable tourism and acts to help make this a reality"*⁸.

2.2 New destinations, growing competition

As presented above, international tourism arrivals expanded at an annual rate of 6.2% from 1950 to 2010, growing from 25 million to 940 million. The income generated by tourism grew at an even stronger rate reaching approx. US\$ 919 billion (€ 693 billion) in 2010. However there are more and more destinations competing for these revenues within the tourism sector. Especially the developing and emerging countries that enter the market, challenging the established tourism destinations in Europe and the Americas. *"While, in 1950, the top 15 destinations absorbed 88% of all international arrivals, by 1970 that proportion was 75% and 55% in 2010, reflecting the emergence of new destinations, many of them in developing countries"*⁹. This reflects the changes of preferences with regard to the touristic destinations over the last decades.

"As growth has been particularly fast in the world's emerging regions, the share of international tourist arrivals received by emerging and developing countries has steadily risen, from 32% in 1990 to 47% in 2010" (UNWTO, 2011, 2). Further to above, *"modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses a growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress. Today, the business volume of tourism equals or even exceeds that of oil exports, food products or automobiles. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce and represents, at the same time, one of the main income sources for many developing countries. This growth goes hand in hand with an increasing level of diversification and competition among destinations. This global spread of tourism in industrialized and developed*

⁸ UNWTO Annex: http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/448Annex_unwto_cln.pdf (accessed on 06.06.2012).

⁹ <http://www.loc.gov/rr/business/BERA/issue11/general.html> (accessed on 01.09.2011).

states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture to telecommunications"¹⁰.

According to the World Travel Organization, international arrivals are expected to reach over 1.56 billion by the year 2020,¹¹ and hence representing an important economic factor (see above). However out of these arrivals worldwide in 2020, 1.2 billion will be intraregional and only 378 million will be long-haul travelers. In particular for emerging countries this is of growing importance. "Domestic tourism was becoming more significant in some developing countries as changing standards of living meant domestic travel was becoming more accessible to a wider cross-section of society" (Pearce/Butler, 2002, 1).

The long term forecast of "Tourism 2020 Vision"¹² suggested that "Long-haul travel worldwide will grow faster at a rate of 5.4 per cent per year over the period 1995-2020, than intraregional travel, at a rate of 3.8 per cent. Consequently the ratio between intraregional and long-haul travel is expected to shift from around 82:18 in 1995 to close to 76:24 in 2020"¹³.

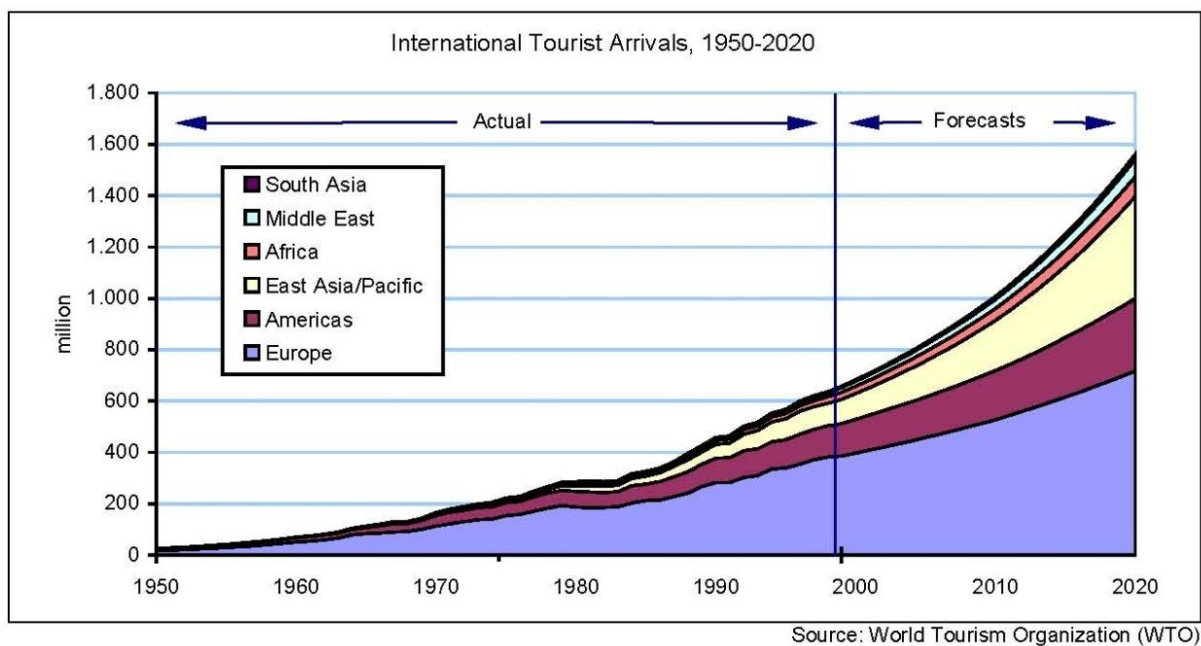


Fig. 4: Tourism 2020 Vision
(Source: [www.tpdco.org/pdf/Tourism 2020 vision.pdf](http://www.tpdco.org/pdf/Tourism%2020%20vision.pdf))

¹⁰ UNWTO: <http://www2.unwto.org/en/content/why-tourism> (accessed on 29.12.2012).

¹¹ UNWTO Tourism market trend 2001: [www.tpdco.org/pdf/Tourism 2020 vision.pdf](http://www.tpdco.org/pdf/Tourism%2020%20vision.pdf) (accessed on 01.09.2011).

¹² Tourism 2020 Vision is the World Tourism Organization's long-term forecast and assessment of the development of tourism up to the first 20 years of the new millennium.

¹³ UNWTO Tourism market trend 2001: [www.tpdco.org/pdf/Tourism 2020 vision.pdf](http://www.tpdco.org/pdf/Tourism%2020%20vision.pdf) (accessed on 07.10.2011).

Even though the trends and figures presented above show that the tourism sector is an emerging sector with considerable growth rates, it does not mean that there are no cyclical downturns in this tourism development. In 2009 for example the whole tourism sector suffered from the financial crisis with negative impacts on the revenues. While Europe and the Americas were recovering at a moderate pace, Asia was “*showing the strongest rebound from 2009*” (UNWTO, 2010, 4), despite persistent uncertainties regarding the global economy. This leads us to the following chapter (2.3) which takes a closer look at the developments of tourism in Southeast Asia.

2.3 Tourism and economic development in Southeast Asia

As shown above (see chapter 2.2) Southeast Asia experienced a significant boost in tourism and economic development. The rapid growth of arrivals and the fast recovery in 2009 was due to the circumstances of individual countries in Southeast Asia. In Thailand for example, the social and political stability played a major role and the tourists continued visiting the country. “*The 13.5 million visitors in 2009 accounted for 6.5% of Thailand's gross domestic product, reaffirming tourism as the country's single largest foreign-exchange earner and a crucial component to its overall economic health*”¹⁴. The confidence of the potential travelers to the country was returning after a short period of uncertainty, after a different group of protesters, called the Yellow Shirts, invaded and shut down Bangkok's international airport for eight days in late 2008¹⁵. Hotels and airlines had reduced their prices and low-cost carriers had increased their services to attract tourists. This had positive effects on travel flows to the whole region (i.e. Cambodia and Laos) because many tours were integrated in to transnational trips starting in Thailand. During the past decade, tourism in the Asia-pacific region increased by 7% per annum.

In addition to the general developments of the tourism sector, the countries in Southeast Asia endeavored to foster the tourism in the region. One example is the association of the ASEAN nations. The ASEAN countries had a range of mutual cooperation policies and integrated bilateral agreements including the tourism as a development factor¹⁶. There

¹⁴ <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1982555,00.html#ixzz2IB0gPepK> (accessed on 16.01.2013).

¹⁵ <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1982555,00.html#ixzz2IB0gPepK> (accessed on 16.01.2013).

¹⁶ Lao PDR Tourism Strategy 2006-2020.

was a possible direction for ASEAN tourism; in order to advance ASEAN economic, co-operation in promotion and marketing, each of the travel areas may introduce two or more countries which can be promoted as packages and sold in foreign markets (Wong, 1992, 274). The founding ASEAN member countries in 1967 namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand had well-established conditions and environments, especially with regard to infrastructure facilities and economic development, entry-exit regulations, transportation, accommodation and a high standard of services (LNTA, 2006, 3). In addition to that the ASEAN had implemented projects to promote tourism under the idea of promoting the region as *one destination*. In order to integrate the policy and the promoted tourism measures, ASEAN leaders had signed a tourism agreement in 2002 in Phnom Penh. The main goal was to cooperate with each other on the question of tourism and to strengthen the tourism sector in the ASEAN region and to increase its competitiveness to international countries. The agreement aimed to remove barriers such as visa regulations to cooperate in the promotion of ASEAN tourism. Cooperation among private and public sectors was promoted by the ASEAN Tourism Enterprise Association, the ASEAN Association on Restaurants and Hotels, ASEAN Aviation, and others. Further, the ASEAN supported improvements in the field of human resources development, service and travel standards to improve the quality of tourism in the region.

A second example is the *Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)* which is a union of six riparian states to the Mekong River who decided to promote the tourism along the Mekong. Member states are China (Yunnan and Kuangshi), Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The GMS union was initiated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in order to induce cooperation between the countries in the field of tourism development and measures which had been implemented such as: the promotion of the Mekong sub-region to become a single destination, the organization of workshops and seminars, study tours for travel agencies and the public relations work with international media. Moreover, a GMS-homepage was launched to inform of responsible ways of tourism, the presentation of the region at international exhibitions was coordinated and a marketing concept was developed to promote eco-tourism and sustainable tourism. Over the time the Mekong sub-regional countries have signed a number of agreements such as: on the transport of goods, telecommunication, power systems and personnel administration systems. In addition to the cooperation of the GMS Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand

and Vietnam developed an additional cooperation framework called *Ayeyawady - Chao Phraya - Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy* (ACMECS) with the goal to promote a well-balanced development in the region.

2.4 Sustainable tourism

For all these cooperation schemes as presented above 'sustainable development' has become an important buzzword. *"In the past decade, growing interest in ecotourism and nature-based tourism presents an opportunity to address the environmental and social impacts of tourism activities, while fostering sustainable tourism"* (Hundloe, 2002, 8). Especially after the World Summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, forms of community-based tourism came into focus, for example, in Thailand, home-stay programs¹⁷ and agro-tourism (Thavarasukha, 2002, 235). There was a call for higher environmental standards in the tourism sector and the tourism venues with high energy consumption (e.g. golf courses or indoor skiing in desert countries) as well as the general environmental impacts of mass tourism attracted more and more criticism (Vorlaufer/Becker-Baumann, 2007). During this period which was characterized by economic growth, however, low cost airlines and mass tourism experienced a big boom. Future planning and development measures like the improvement of infrastructure (e.g. road construction interstate highways etc.) in Southeast Asia enabled the travel sector to prosper throughout the region. After the summit in Rio, concerns regarding the sustainability of tourism become more and more integrated into the national strategies. For example Thailand's tourism strategy plan from 2002 to 2005 stated the aim to move towards quality tourism via new marketing campaigns such as a paradise on earth. The government also emphasized on the balance between marketing and development by using supply rather than demand as a driving force¹⁸. The government had used tourism as a tool to boost the economy via specific stimulus programs. Domestic tourism in this context played a crucial role to generate more income and revenues in different the regions, especially with regard to some sub-regions, for example, the Emerald Triangle of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, Heritage Necklace of Southeast Asia, connecting cultural touristic locations like Phukam of Burma, Nan of Thailand, Luang Prabang of Laos, Hue of

¹⁷ Local people serve tourists as guides, porters, food providers and accommodation (Leksukundilok, 2004, 33).

¹⁸ In how far this could really be realized in Thailand will be discussed in the empirical part of this study (see Chapter 8).

Vietnam and Siem Riep of Cambodia together with other tourism projects under GMS and ACMEC cooperation (Phayakvichien, 2005, 52-54). The situation was, however, that tourism became based on competition, promotion, investment and big developments. Tourism is one of the economic sectors that enjoys rapid growth in many countries around the world. Therefore, many countries pay specific attention to the development of tourism, as a key for socio-economic development (Williams, 2009, 81). It contributes to foreign currency accumulations, facilitates domestic financial liquidity and distributes income to both urban and rural areas. In the following chapters, the focus is laid on the development of tourism in two countries with totally different backgrounds. Thailand with a long history of tourism on the one side and Laos which has just recently gone through a process of political opening up from being a communist country towards being a country accepting new capitalistic influences.

2.5 The development of tourism in Thailand

Tourism in Thailand dates from long ago and thus the country has profited from its long-term experiences and a well-developed touristic infrastructure. Chapter 2.5.1 presents the development of tourism in Thailand from its beginning in the 19th century when the Vietnam War in 1960s was considered as starting point of biggest boost to tourism (Kaosa-ard, 1998). However, not every province profited from the boom of mass tourism. Chapter 2.5.2 takes a closer look at the I-san region which presents an example of the discrepancy of tourism development in Thailand.

2.5.1 The dawn of tourism in Thailand

Compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand has a long history of tourism. Even in the 19th century, when tourism and traveling was still a matter for discoverers and members of the educated class¹⁹, the King of Thailand Mongkut Rama IV and his successor King Chulalongkorn Rama V started for the very first time to promote tourism to Thailand. As Meyer (1988) describes the evolution of international tourism in Thailand was a royal and political affair (ibid: 61). Due to this open-door policy in combination with the ongoing modernization during the reigns of King Monkut and King

¹⁹ In 1841 Thomas Cook was the first who organised a package tour which has often been seen as the beginning of the modern tourism. However the boom of package tours and mass tourism developed in the early 20th century (Hopfinger, 2007, 719).

Chulalongkorn (1851 – 1910) the first foreign merchants and pioneer visitors came to Thailand. The appearance of tourism dates back to the 1920s when the commander in chief of the Siamese Royal State Railway promoted the beauty of Thailand²⁰ in the United States of America (Peleggi, 1996, 434). Soon, Western-owned boarding houses and hotels were operating in Bangkok and a Public Relations Division was set up to welcome tourists to Thailand, and to promote the country to the international public.²¹ A short time later the English travel Book “*Guide to Bangkok – with notes on Siam*” was written by the Danish anthropologist Erik Seidenfaden and published by the Siamese Royal State Railway Department with three editions between 1927 and 1932 (Peleggi, 1996, 434). Seidenfaden suggested visiting important temples, palaces and monument and developed several tours which lasted up to seven-days (Seidenfaden, 1927, 47ff.).

2.5.2 Consolidation and mass tourism

Since the 1930s the promotion of tourism became more and more institutionalized. In 1936 the Ministry of Commerce presented a plan with three major objectives focused on tourism. The three major goals of the plan were (a) to disseminate tourism information in order to encourage tourists to visit Thailand, (b) to be open-minded and prepared to host tourists, and (c) to develop attractions and accommodations.²² “*The push for mass tourism began in the late 1950s in the context of the economic development that characterized Marshal Sarit Thanarat’s premiership. The rapid growth of the service sector, particularly in the capital, was of great support to the burgeoning tourism industry*” (Peleggi, 1996, 434). In 1959 the Tourist Organization of Thailand (TOT) was established and Thai Airways International was founded one year later in 1960 as a joint venture between Thailand's domestic carrier, Thai Airways Company (TAC) and the Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS)²³. The latter Scandinavian enterprise initially provided expertise in the field of management and marketing. SAS further assisted the new Airline with extended trainings aimed to build an independent national airline within a short time (Peleggi, 1996, 434). Moreover, the world tour undertaken by the Thai royal couple during this period was considered as a major contribution to promote of the country abroad

²⁰ Called *Siam* at that time.

²¹ Tourism Authority of Thailand 2012: <http://thai.tourismthailand.org/about-tat> (accessed on 01.09.2012).

²² Tourism Authority of Thailand 2012: <http://thai.tourismthailand.org/about-tat> (accessed on 05.09.2012).

²³ <http://www.thaiairways.com/about-thai/company-profile/en/history.htm> (accessed on 08.03.2013).

(Meyer, 1988, 68f.). The royal state visits covered a number of countries. First to Vietnam, Indonesia and Burma, then to fourteen western countries, Malaysia, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the Philippines. The tour had an important effect on tourism development in Thailand as it gained high press coverage while portraying a good image of Thailand. The country was represented by the king and the queen and particularly the most lavish visit was to the United States. Ten of the twenty-three states visited were monarchies that led to royal meetings which gave the country royal glamour and aroused interest in Thailand. The Tourism Organization of Thailand (now Tourism Authority of Thailand: TAT) stated that the grand tour by their majesties had represented Thailand to the world as best as possible and millions of people who had not heard about Thailand previously who had been impressed and would like to see the country. The tours exceeded all expectations (Meyer, 1988, 68).

2.5.3 The Vietnam War – driving force of tourism in Thailand

Beside the numerous efforts described above to promote Thailand as a touristic destination a historic coincidence proved to be unexpected driving force of tourism to Thailand, the Vietnam War. In previous times, traveling to Thailand was mainly linked to the visit of Buddhist temples or holy places in a limited scope. Already after World War II, increase in international tourism to Thailand was appeared to be looming. The physical infrastructures necessary for tourism were constructed and led to a higher number of international tourist arrivals, consistently growing throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The period of the Vietnam War in the 1960s²⁴ then, resulted in a significant increase of foreigners coming to Thailand. Indeed the number of U.S. military personnel in Thailand was rising day by day which was linked to the biggest boost to tourism in Thailand where the country became a popular leisure destination for U.S. soldiers not least because of the R & R (Rest and Recreation) program of the U.S. Army (Kaosa-ard, 1998).

The presence of the U.S. military had far-reaching impacts on tourism development. Most soldiers reports from the vacations they had experienced in Thailand were positive

²⁴ *“There are even arguments over what the war should be called –the Vietnam War, the Second Indochina war, or the American war in Vietnam, among other variations. “Vietnam War” is the name most Americans use to denote the conflict that involved the United States in Indochina from about 1950 to 1975. Like the name, the dates are approximate. The French War in Indochina, of the First Indochina war, as it is also-called, began at the end of World War II and continued until a cease-fire was arranged at the Geneva Conference of 1954. The Second Indochina War, or what the Vietnamese term “the American war,” began around 1960 and continued until the last American civil and military officials departed Saigon in April 1975.”* (Anderson, 2011, 8).

and this attracted other travelers to Thailand. At that time Bangkok became the entry point and gateway for all visitors to Thailand and attracted most of the tourists including U.S. military troops.

“The successful tourism promotion and expenditures by the U.S. military personnel have brought about a needed expansion in the hotel and restaurant industry, particularly in Bangkok” (Hunchangsith, 1974, 47) .

However, the impact of the Vietnam War was not restricted to the capital and central Thailand. The role of the neighboring communist countries Laos and Cambodia was closely observed by the U.S. military. Due to the fear of communist subversion in the impoverished regions of northeastern Thailand, the U.S. and Thai militaries established transportation facilities in the northeastern of the country. The most important infrastructure was the so-called “Mitrapap”, known as the U.S.-Thailand Friendship Highway²⁵, that assured a quick connection between Bangkok and the northeastern provinces of Nong Khai. Many rural roads linking province and district centers were improved, and roads linking isolated villages with the main highways were constructed. These roads and highways built by the U.S. army from the 1960s to the 1970s initially for military, strategic, and political reasons had an important impact on the development of the country in general²⁶ and on tourism development in particular.

“The presences of USS military bases in the northeastern provinces occasioned the mushrooming of hotels, restaurants, bar, nightclubs and massage parlors; the same took place in Bangkok, destination of American soldiers on their five days of Rest and Recreation leave” (Peleggi, 1996, 435).

This gave rise to considerable developments within the transportation system, the urban infrastructure and the service sector in general. A series of Thai-American rural development schemes were initiated from the mid-1960s. However, also the large number of American soldiers who left the frontline of the Vietnam War for short-time holidays in Thailand were important for the tourism development. These holiday trips were orga-

²⁵ Economic Impact of the U.S. Military Presence in Thailand, 1960-72 (Hunchangsith, 1974) .

²⁶ The new road network provided easier traveling and access to Bangkok for countless peasants (see. (Gebhardt, 2004)).

nized by the U.S. military at large (R & R Program²⁷) and represented an important economic factor. The following graph shows these economic impacts of the U.S. presence and engagement in Thailand from 1963 to 1978.

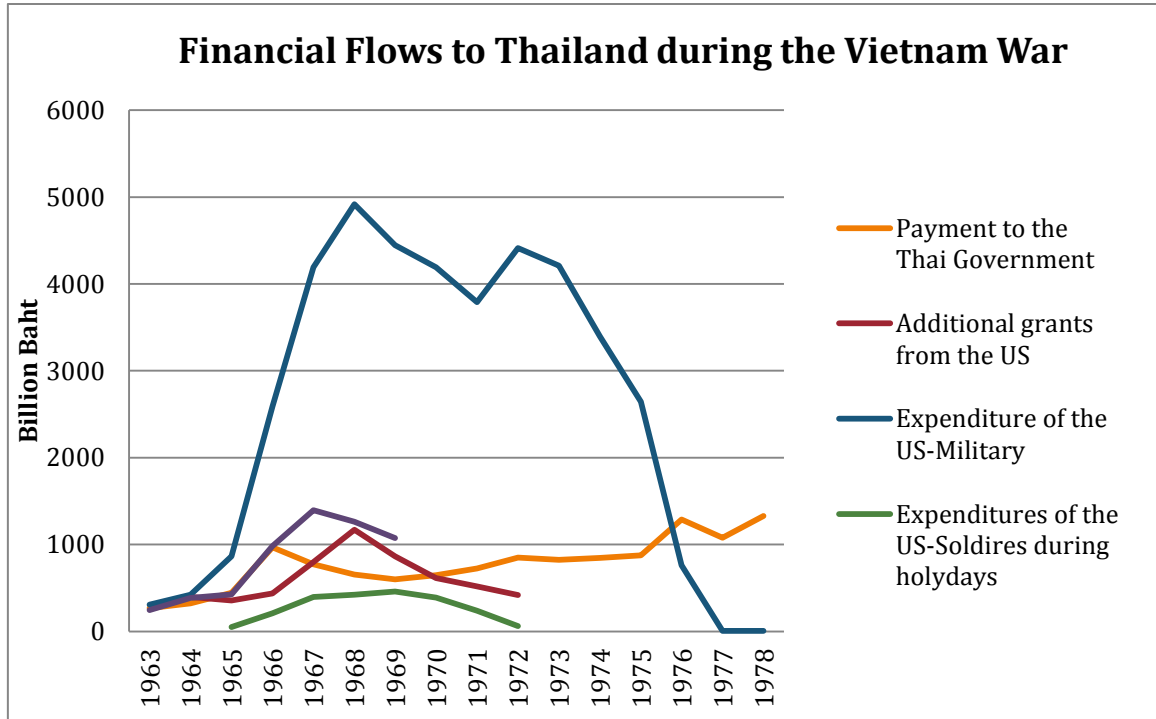


Fig. 5: American financial flows to Thailand during the Vietnam War (Source: own draft, based on data from (Hohnholz, 1984, 427))

In the aftermath of the presence of American soldiers Thailand became more and more a destination for usual tourists who had heard about the beauty of the country from the returning soldiers. Due to this the Vietnam War “(...) was followed by a growing demand from the United States, Japan, Europe, and Australia for vacations based on “sand, sea, sun, and sex—for the four Ss” (Matthews, 1978, 81).

2.5.4 The post-war period

In the mid 1970s, the question of stability and security became an increasingly important issue for the tourism in the region. During 1979 to 1991 tourism was used as a political tool to fight the communist insurgency. Where the government had successfully involved certain areas into the tourism development new livelihood for the local people were created and new jobs and markets for local products were established (Phayakvichien, 2005, 47). In the atmosphere of communist takeovers and rising Islamic

²⁷ Rest and Recreation Program.

fundamentalism in the region, Thailand was still a safe country to visit (Peleggi, 1996, 435). This had a stimulating effect on tourism. International visitor arrivals grew from 81,340 to one million from 1965 to 1973. Accordingly the revenues generated in the tourism sector increased from THB 196 million in 1965 to THB 3.5 billion. As the general economic situation slid into a recession in the second half of the 1970s, the tourism sector became a major source of revenues. Against this background the Fourth Economic and Social Development Plan of Thailand for the years 1977-1981, included tourism development for the first time. After that the first National Tourism Development Plan was developed in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute of Tourism Development, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) and the Tourism Organization of Thailand (Phayakvichien, 2005, 44-45). This first plan led to another master plan with feasibility studies in some major tourist destinations such as Pattaya in 1978, Phuket in 1979, Songkhla/Hat Yai in 1979, and Chiang Mai with a preliminary study in December 1979. The celebration of His Majesty the King Bhumibol 60th birthday coupled with *Visit Thailand Year*²⁸ in 1987 was one of most successful ventures.

2.5.5 The period of economic crisis and recovery

Despite the successful developments in Thailand the country also had to deal with several crises. The impacts of the oil crises in 1980s, the world economic recession in 1983, and the Gulf war in 1991 affected the tourism in Thailand and the whole region. In addition to that the public was concerned about the internal unrest during the abortive military coup attempt in May 1992. These situations caused a decrease in tourist arrivals for the first time since 1976 (Peleggi, 1996, 436). In the late 1990s, the Asian financial crisis shook the region. One important factor for Thailand to recover was the *Amazing Thailand Campaign* which was launched in 1998-1999 (Chumni, 2001). It was designed to boost tourism at first place, similar to the previous campaign in 1987 (Phayakvichien, 2005, 50). Tourism has grown rapidly in Thailand during the last 20 years. At the turn of the millennium, a Ministry of Tourism and Sports was constituted²⁹ which shows the

²⁸ The *Visit Thailand Year* was a campaign declared by the government of General Prem Tinsulanonda, to provide help in economy trouble when the agriculture and industry sector staggering in the 1980s. Since then, following the financial crisis in 1997, the government of Chuan Leekpai had launched further promotional campaign called the *Amazing Thailand 1998-1999*, with the aim to foster economic in Thailand (Pleumarom, 2001).

²⁹ It was established in 2002 with the mission to develop an effective management of tourism development and to “enhance the regional and global competitiveness of tourism and sports industries” (MoTaS 2008: http://www.mots.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=723&filename=index__EN).

efforts of Thailand to find the answer how to face the crises by fostering tourism development. The government focused on a great deal on tourism as development strategy. One of the primary goals was to make Thailand to become the '*Tourism Capital of Asia*' with a total of 20 million visitors by 2008³⁰ and to increase revenue generated from THB 384 billion in 2004 to nearly THB 789 billion in 2008³¹.

2.5.6 The consequences of tourism

The most striking impact of tourism is the impact on ecosystems and the environment. Even tourism which is nature-related cannot be excluded. In northern Thailand for example adventure tourism like trekking and river-rafting is quite popular. Even though hill tribe trekking had been introduced with the aim to protect the environment by offering an alternative income to the tribes which usually relied on shifting cultivation (Cohen, 1989, 35) (Dearden, 1991, 400), however an uncontrolled number of tourists lead to damages in the ecosystems like the distribution of rubbish and destruction of vegetation . Still the environmental pollution is mainly a problem in the hot spots of tourism in the south of the country like Phuket, Koh Samui, Pattaya and many other places . The excessive construction of hotel resorts close to the shore line and beaches, induced tremendous waste and sewage disposal problems. In addition to that there is a rising traffic problem polluting the environment in a more invisible way. Moreover the aquatic systems are under pressure. In 1991 5% of the coral reefs were severely damaged and 59% were considerably damaged mainly caused by the influences of tourism and less due to trawling (Meyer, 1988, 687) .

"Tourism itself has multivariate impacts on the natural environment, ..." (Wong, 2001, 215).

In many beach resorts for example, Batu Ferringhi in Penang, Malaysia, Kuta in Bali, Indonesia, Patong Bay in Phuket, Thailand; should be the tourism considered as major cause for environmental degradation. There should be many lessons learned from these examples however, environmental degradation is still prevalent in the hot spots of tour-

³⁰ <http://www.traveldailynews.asia/news/article/2895/thailand-to-be-tourism-capital> 26 October 2007 (accessed on 01.09.2008).

³¹ <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/news/2004/12/18/55757/Thailand%E2%80%99s-tourism.htm> 18 December 2004 (accessed on 01.09.2008).

ism (Wong, 2001, 218). Especially after the world summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 sustainable ways of tourism are discussed. Especially the importance of an adjusted tourism for the typical destinations of mass tourism was discussed. An example is Phuket, a famous destination in southern Thailand, which was once in 1980s a beautiful sea resort where coral reefs were saved and in good shape. The reef was important for tourism activities like diving and snorkeling. Over the time Phuket advanced to one of the most important destinations of mass tourism in Thailand and its environment has been affected accordingly. There are only few people that would imagine that ecotourism would be possible in this region, as Phuket always illustrated a site of mass tourism also in comparison to Pattaya and other beach destinations in Thailand.

“In the light of the necessity of such access, it is clear that ecotourism enjoys its greatest chances for success not in remote areas, but adjacent to ‘mass’ destinations such as Phuket” (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2004, 6).

However, the province realized this necessity and asked for coastal management by the government. Over the last twenty years, ecotourism in Phuket emerged and proved its success not in remote areas, but in the main touristic regions, which are still partly dependent on mass tourism. But the effects on the environment are not the only impact of tourism. Irresponsible and relentless tourism also lead to long-term changes in local economies but also the society itself (Dearden/Harron, 1992).

One example is the acculturation of the local population and ethnic minorities due to the intercultural exchange (or better confrontation) taking place under the umbrella of cultural tourism. One characteristic example represent the popular trekking tours in the northern Thailand (Kesmanee/Charoensi, 1995). These trekking tours typically lead to the hill-tribe regions and promise a spectacular nature in combination with the hospitable culture of the exotic hill tribes. The organized trekking tours raised year by year number of trekkers and frequency of visits. This had changed the previous ways of authentic village life tremendously (Ishii, 2012). The visits were guided by a headman of the community and conducted in the mood of hospitality from tribe’s tradition. No payment was expected. This changed after the tour companies successfully explored and penetrated villages, introduced special infrastructure for trekkers. Cash money became a key factor, villagers were no longer shy and seem feeling pleased to be photographed.

“Some villagers become extremely aggressive in trying to sell their wares to the trekker. Photographing is welcome, but at a price” (Dearden, 1991, 402-404).

But this societal change caused by the impact tourism is not restricted to some remote hill tribe areas. The maybe most prominent downside of tourism in Thailand represents the sex tourism which can be observed in nearly all parts of the country (especially in the urban centers like Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya). There are two major socioeconomic reasons which led to prostitution. On the one hand the poverty particularly in the northern and northeastern parts of Thailand, and on the other hand the social policy. Even before the R&R program of U.S. military during the Vietnam War and in the aftermath the international tourism sex tourism, prostitution was already an issue in Thailand. It then became internationally well-known as sex tourism in Pattaya. Especially high numbers of male tourists were registered. The demand lead to supply of sexual services and vice versa. Many women tried to earn enough income to support their family members by working within tourism sectors such as bartending or dancing jobs and even engaging in the tourist escort services (Wahnschafft, 1982).

“Sex represents an important tourism attraction for many developing countries” (Leheny, 1995, 367).

However this phenomenon would never exist without demand. The downside of sex tourism in Thailand has multifarious dissensions. Most obviously the poverty situation of the women *forces* them to some extend to engage in a business which they usually do not do voluntarily and also threatens their physical and emotional integrity. The prostitutes are seen as sexual products and also the problem of HIV/AIDS has grown rapidly in the country. The latter aspect is not only a problem affecting the prostitutes and their clients but also other parts of the society (husbands, children and families).

2.5.7 The development of tourism in the I-san region

For a long time tourism in Thailand has been concentrated mainly on a north-to-south axis. Three major destinations have been in especially popular; Chiang Mai in the north, Bangkok in the center, and Phuket in the south. Even though the tourism has been extended further towards boundaries of the country in the north and south, new destinations were explored by travelers as unspoiled sites which gradually attracted more and

more tourists. The expansion, however, has not changed the pattern of those three major tourist spots mentioned above.

“Outside the central axis foreign tourism is scarce, as indicated by the fact that the huge northeastern of the country known as I-san,..., attracted a mere 200,000 foreign tourists in 1997 (Bangkok Post, 10 August 1998)”³² (Cohen, 2001, 158).

Although I-san was largely neglected by international tourism during its booming period and which was mainly focused of the southern regions near the beaches and major cultural attractions, however also in the I-san region there is still a fair amount of tourism infrastructure. It dates back to the time of the Vietnam War. The Cold War started in 1945, Ho Chi Minh had proclaimed independence and the French responded by retaking the control of Vietnam being supported by the United States. With the beginning of the Vietnam War the presence of foreigners in Thailand was on the rise. The personnel of the U.S. military was sent to the Thai border to counter any possible communist invasion (see above). During the war period, travel and leisure were initiated as holidays for the U.S. troops based in Thailand. Also the I-san region was a destination for the U.S. military personnel. There were four major operational bases established in the I-san provinces: Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat), Udon Thani, Nakhon Phanom and Ubonratchathani.

Until well into the 1990ies I-san was perceived as a *dead end street* by the majority of tourists. Crossing the border into the neighboring countries Laos and Cambodia was difficult or even impossible due to the political situation. Historically, the northeastern Thailand had been the center of opposition movements representing a problem for the Thai government (Alpern, 1975, 684).

An interesting development in Thailand was that to use tourism as a political tool to fight communist insurgency from 1979 to 1991.

“After the government had successfully neutralized certain areas, tourism was introduced to provide a means of livelihood for the people, using local product for domestic tourists such as insurgent’s hideaways” (Phayakvichien, 2005, 47).

³² Interconnected Worlds: Tourism in Southeast Asia.

As a result many areas had become very popular attractions like Phu Hin Rong Kla, Khao Khor and Khao Luang.

At the beginning of tourism development in the I-san region transnational trips, for example from Northeastern Thailand to Laos and to Vietnam were difficult because of the poor infrastructure and bad accessibility. Accordingly the I-san region was not really able to compete with more attractive destinations as e.g. the North of Thailand (Chiang Mai and the national parks of the North) and the well known beaches in the south. Thus until the mid 1990s there were only smaller hot spots of international tourism in the Northeast. These were for example the Khmer temples of Phimai (which lost a lot of their attractive after the temples of Angkor in Cambodia became accessible) and the border town Nong Khai, which served as a waiting room for people waiting for a visa to Laos. So the big question is, whether the Northeastern has the chance in the future to participate to a larger degree from the tourism economy after the opening of the borders to the formerly communist countries, as Rogers has predicted enthusiastically in 1993:

“There are today fine opportunities for the Northeastern to serve as the gateway to Indochina and present plans envisage a number of new links eastwards across the Mekong and Laos to Vietnam. When these routes are in operation, they will allow greatly increased trading and tourism in both directions. As a former Thai prime minister expressed it, ‘Turning the battlefields of Indochina into a market place’” (Rogers, 1993, 226).

In fact the number of tourists in I-san has been changed over the years. In December 2011 the number of international tourists in I-san reached 850,422³³. However this is still a relatively low level compared to other regions in Thailand as the following graph indicates. (see Fig. 6)

³³ Tourism Authority of Thailand 2013: http://marketingdatabase.tat.or.th/ewt_news.php?nid=188 สถิติการท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทย (รายภาค) (accessed on 30.01.2013).

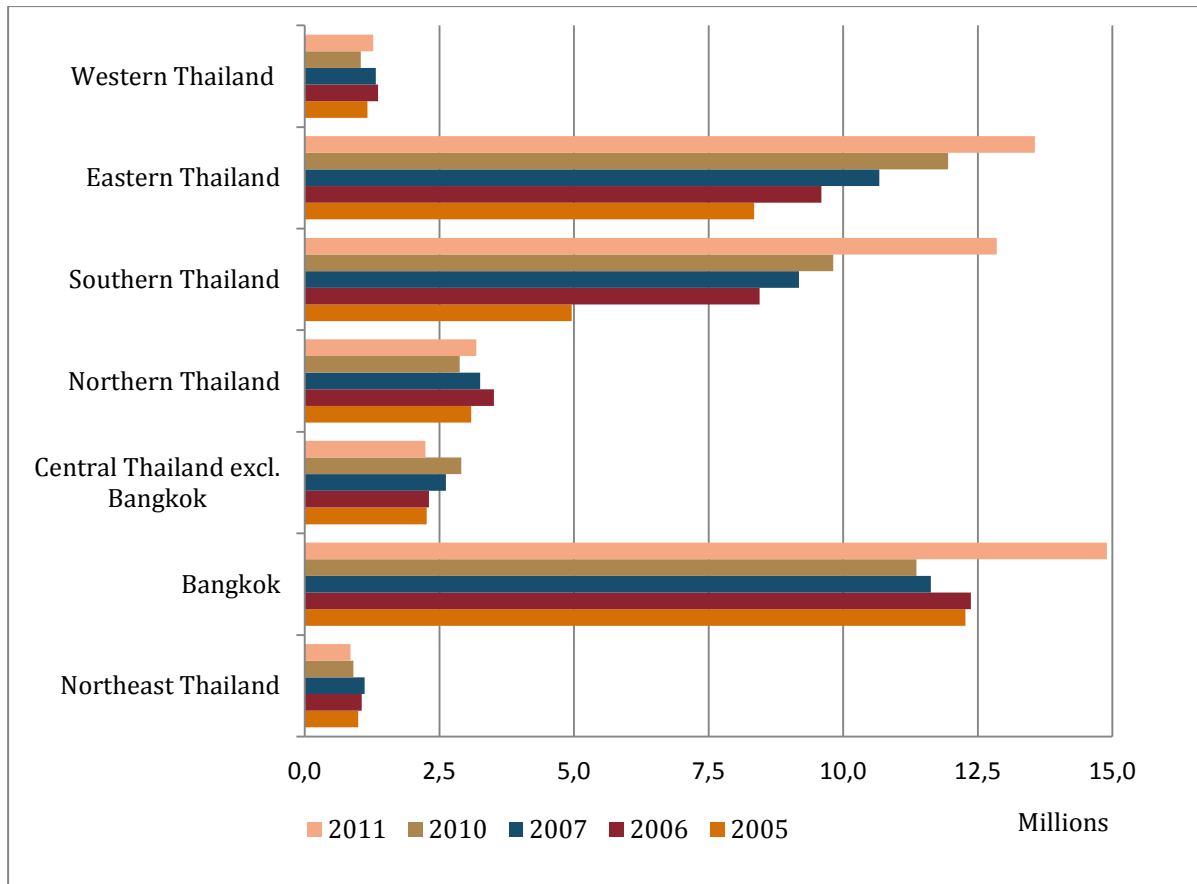


Fig. 6: Recent data on tourism arrivals in northeastern Thailand (Source: own draft based on data from Tourism Authority of Thailand 2013; statistics of regional tourist)

2.6 The development of tourism in Laos

Laos is a landlocked country and its population of about 6.2 million inhabitants consists of many different ethnic groups. As various as its people, is the history of the country marked by *“war and civil unrest, prompted largely by the involvement of outside powers in its affairs”* (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 199). In 1893 Laos became a French Protectorate and was occupied by Japan during World War II and gained finally its independence from France in 1953. Short time later Laos became the scene for a proxy war of the power struggle in the course of the Cold War and the Vietnam War. In 1975 the Lao People’s Democratic Republic was proclaimed followed by a period of communist rule, which was linked to a policy sealing-off. *“Since 1986, however, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been a sustained attempt to move from a command economy to a more capitalist, market-orientated system”* (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 199). How could tourism develop under these conditions and in how far does the history influences the

tourisms still today? The following chapter will raise the issue of tourism development in Laos which was chosen as one of the research sites of this study.

2.6.1 The situation before the opening of the borders

Due to the political situation, Laos was a rather closed country which did not open its doors to international visitors before 1986. The political situation was also the reason why there was only few exchange and cooperation with other countries. Only few tourists traveled to Laos and only few places in Laos could be to some extent described as touristic sites. One example is Vang Vieng a small town in northern Laos which became a famous tourist place later on. However most travelers to Laos were people visiting their relatives. A sort of tourism business was seldom observed at this time. Moreover, the accessibility was a major constraint as the transportation system and the infrastructure within the country was not yet in good condition (Sosamphanh et al., 2012, 6). Accordingly the number of international visitors was negligible. Foreign visitors were mainly representatives of international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in particular coming from socialist countries. But what are the reasons behind this situation?

2.6.2 Laos in the turmoil of war and political transformation

After the independence from France in the early 1950s Laos became the plaything of foreign powers. The small country in-between Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia was drawn into the circumstances of Vietnam War. *“Laos was secretly but massively drawn into the Vietnam/American war. During this ‘secret war’, US forces were supported by Thai and Hmong recruits, and US pilots carried out bombing missions from bases in Thailand and Viet Nam, assisted by non-uniformed military personnel and ‘advisors’ based in western Laos”* (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 199). For the United States Laos represented a strategic country as buffer zone towards the communism spreading from China and North Vietnam. Regardless of the consequences for the country and its people, Laos was bombarded by the US forces. *“Laos has the distinction of being, per capita, the most heavily bombed nation in the world. More than half a million bombing missions were carried out between the years 1964 to 1973, during which more than 2 million tons of explosive ordnances were dropped”* (Starin, 2008, 652). Finally in 1973 a ceasefire was agreed and in 1975 the Lao People’s Democratic Republic was proclaimed. Despite occasional unrests Laos became a mainly stable country after thirty years of war and turmoil. This newly

gained stability is one of the preconditions for the emergence of transnational tourism in the region. After the incidents Laos had nevertheless to struggle with the short and long-term consequences of the War. Economic questions and poverty reduction came to the fore of the political agenda.

2.6.3 Economic dependency and poverty

Foreign supports from international organizations like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank as well as organizations and programs of the United Nations has always been an important aspect of the Lao economic situation (Seidenfaden, 1927, 4). Especially after the independence from France, Laos became more and more dependent on the support of international organizations and the financial assistance foreign countries. From 1950 to 1975, the United States mainly assisted the country with military support and Laos became a kind of buffer zone against the communist system which was spreading in Vietnam (see above). After the end of the Vietnam War and the accompanying political changes the United States stopped the support with engraving impacts on the Lao economy. However, in 1976-1985 the Soviet Union took over and exerted influence over Laos. The support from the Soviet Union focused on economic support especially within the agricultural sector, like the implementation of irrigation schemes but also within the forestry, and the mining sector (Seidenfaden, 1927, 4). During this period of time the influence of communist movements was on the rise which finally culminated in the revolution and takeover of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party in 1975. After the communist revolution the Lao People's democratic Republic was proclaimed and until 1986, the Lao economy was transformed into a centrally planned economy and private ownership was very limited. These circumstances led to a decrease in production that resulted finally in food-shortage and food-insecurity. The issue of economic dependency and poverty became a central aspect of the political agenda in Laos. *"Since the mid-1990s, the government has set itself the target of eradicating poverty, reducing its dependence on overseas development assistance, and moving out of the category of 'less developed country' by 2020"* (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 199). After some time the strategies and efforts of the Lao government paid off. *"From 1991 to 2000, for instance, real Gross Domestic Product grew at an annual average of 6.3%, and those living in poverty declined overall from 46% of the population in 1992 to 33% in 2002-2003"* (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 199). However there are huge differences of economic development throughout the

country. These differences can be explained inter alia through a different opening towards tourism of the different regions. This is not least linked to the touristic potential and accessibility of the regions (see Chapter 6). Tourism represented finally an important strategy of the Lao government to foster the economic development in the country, which leads us to the following chapter.

2.6.4 The formation of a new tourism sector

Since the late 1980s a new policy could be observed in Laos. Due to the difficult economic situation reforms were progressively implemented. In 1986, a new Economic Management Mechanism was introduced with the aim to turn Laos into an open-market economy (Radetzki, 1994, 799-800). The important reforms in 1986 towards a market-based economy led to the adoption of an open door policy and tourism had gradually been raised in importance since then.

“The Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) opened its doors to international tourists in 1989 and, since then, the tourism industry has developed rapidly to become one of the country’s largest earners of foreign currency. The Lao PDR possesses a beautiful, virtually untouched natural environment and a population that still practices their rich traditional culture — these two characteristics form the basis for the promotion of tourism development in the Lao PDR” (Yamauchi/Lee, 1999, ii).

This was the natal hour of a new tourism sector which developed since the 1990s. International tourism received a boost when the country was opened to international tourists in October 1989 (Yamauchi/Lee, 1999, 1) (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 200). At the very beginning the *“emphasis was on small, tightly-controlled groups of package tourists. However, in 1995 tourism became a priority for economic development (...) and the second National Tourism Development Plan, published in 1998 (...), emphasised the value of four major types of tourism: conventional sightseers, special interest tourists – for example, eco- and adventure tourists – cross border tourists and domestic tourists”* (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 200). In 1999 a national Tourism Marketing Plan was published which stressed the outstanding role of tourism for the PDR of Laos by describing it as the country’s most important commodity of export. In 2004 a shift to smaller-scale tourism was an-

nounced with the aim to steer tourism development towards a controlled and high-end tourism. Already one year later this new strategy was abandoned in favor of a broad-brush approach of tourism development.

“Finally, yet another year later, a separate strategy was put forward for ecotourism, where it was defined as a ‘tourism activity based in rural areas that is geared towards: conservation of natural and cultural resources, local socioeconomic development, and visitor understanding of, and appreciation for, the places they are visiting’” (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 201).

The government had been attempting to extend the number of entry and exit checkpoints in various parts of the country in order to link with its riparian states. In 2005, there were in total 15 international checkpoints operating. Tourists were able get visa on arrival at 13 checkpoints. Three international airports in Vientiane Capital, Luang Prabang and Pakse simplified the arrivals to Laos. The program of infrastructure development to promote tourism was assisted by various financial institutions and donor countries in form of grants and soft loans which were mainly used for road construction³⁴; the construction of Mekong bridges; improvement and construction of access roads to tourism sites, airports, electricity system, water supply, telephone, etc. In addition, aviation links to tourist towns of each country had been developed (LNTA, 2006).

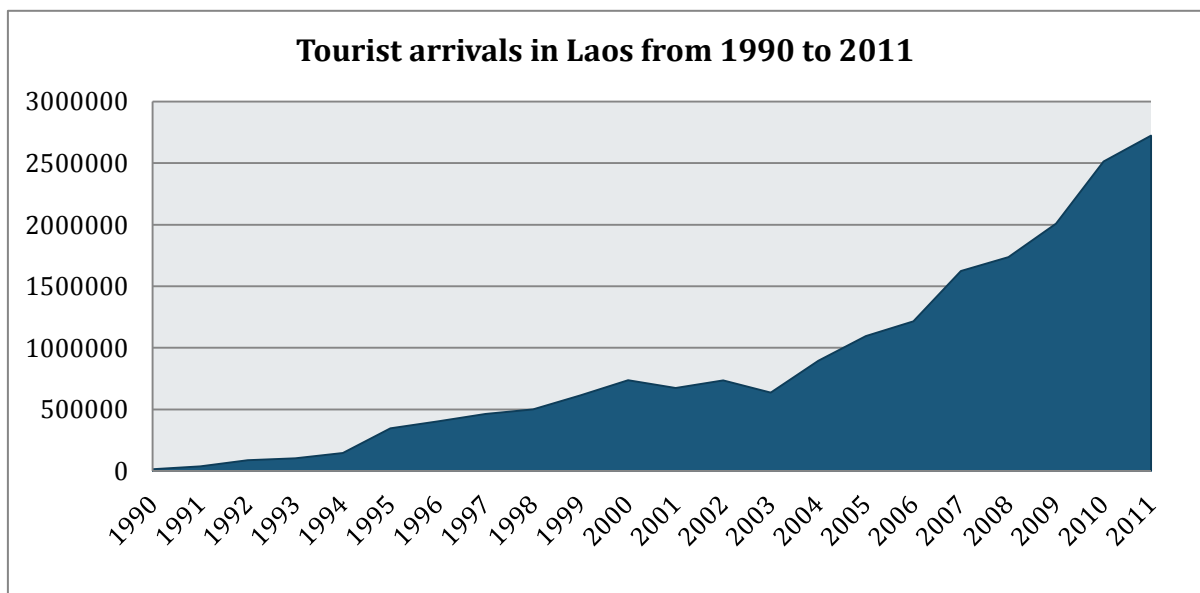


Fig. 7: The beginning of tourism in Laos
(Source: own draft, based on data of the Lao Tourism Development Department, 2011 statistical report)

³⁴ For example road: No.A3, No.8, No.9, No.12, and No.18B.

These efforts lead to the rapid growth of the tourism sector in Laos (see Fig. 7) which can be underpinned by the following figures. From 1990 to 2005, the number of tourists who entered Laos increased at the average rate of 27.6% per annum. In 1990, there were only 14,400 tourists, 37,113 in 1991 with 2,250,000 US\$ as revenue. In 1992, the tourism sector was assigned to the supervision of the National Tourism Authority (named NTA at that time) with the aim to guide the tourism development of the country. The positive trends since the opening process continued to the recent years. In 1999 there were already 614,278 tourists a figure that increased to 2,513,028 in 2010. The revenue from tourism accordingly raised from 97.26 million US\$ in 1999 to 381.67 million US\$ in 2010, an average growth of 17 percent per year (Sosamphanh et al., 2012). The average length of stay for international tourists was five days and regional tourists usually stayed one day. *“Fifty-five percent of tourism industry revenue during 1997 was derived from international tourists who accounted for 19.2 per cent of total tourist arrivals. The majority of arrivals are tourists; in 1997, 70 per cent of international tourists and 78 per cent of regional tourists visited Laos PDR for tourism or leisure purposes”* (Yamauchi/Lee, 1999, 1). The improvement of the touristic infrastructure and general conditions also brought changes at the local level. In many provinces new tourism offices were established to provide touristic information, to improve the organization of the new phenomenon of tourism. Due to this in many provinces open tourism meetings were held to raise the awareness of all sectors which were affiliated to tourism and particularly of the growing number of tourism entrepreneurs (LNTA, 2006).

The “Visit Laos Years 1999-2000” campaign had begun which was reflected in the huge increase of tourists. The tourism sector had become ranked as the number one export earner. In 2004 Laos hosted the ASEAN Fair, and presented the country to the public since then the number of tourists increased up to 894,806 persons generating 118,947,707 US\$ revenues. In 2005 the one million mark was reached and 1.1 million tourists entered Laos. Based on the recent growing number of tourists and regular flow rate, it was estimated that there would be 3.0 million tourists in 2013; 3.5 million in 2015; and 4.1 million in 2020 with expected revenue of 445-620 million US\$ per year. All over all the changes since the process of opening in Laos had significant and positive impact on tourism development, especially with regard to the integration to regional and global economy.

3 Theoretical approach and framework

There has been a long discussion followed by several shifts of paradigm within the discipline of geography. The tourism geography is one example in how far the above mentioned criticism had been incorporated and led to shifts of paradigms.

3.1 The emergence of tourism geography

First publication which can be seen as first papers in the field of tourism geography were published in the 19th century. Kohl (1841), for example, observed a new tourism phenomenon towards leisure places like bathing resorts in Europe, mainly to Switzerland or Austria (Jurczek, 2007, 26). In the 1920s then a rising need for recreation in general was observed in the context of a growing population living in urban areas. The first publications on these phenomenon were mainly descriptive focusing on landscapes or statistic data. Nevertheless the number of publications was on the rise which lead finally to the formation of a new discipline of tourism studies. The scientific research of tourism (Fremdenverkehr³⁵) evolved above all in Germany and in the German speaking world, “which may broadly interpret as research workers trained and/or active in Germany, Austria and Switzerland” (Kreisel, 2004, 164). The formation of *tourism geography* in Germany was in particular stimulated by the geographer Hans Poser (1939) with his geographical study on tourism in the Giant Mountains (Czech Republic). Poser’s research was the first major work to contemplate how geography and tourism were connected. At Poser’s time, mass tourism and the amount of niche markets did not exist. Poser emphasized on the importance of tourism in reading the landscape and its development. He shifted the interest in tourism and leisure to actual places, regions and landscapes. “Poser argued that tourism takes place within geographical space to create its own particular type of cultural landscape in the process” (Kreisel, 2004, 166).

However Poser was not the only forerunner for the systematic study of tourism phenomenon at that time. Several geographers such as Strander (1905), Sputz (1919) and

³⁵ “The term ‘Fremdenverkehr’, which has been the dominant equivalent of ‘tourism’ in German literature up to now, first appeared 1866 in the book “Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb”(The right of women to earn a living) by Louis Otto-Peters, the bourgeois pioneer of women’s equality, in connection with Dresden as one of the ‘town with a lot of tourism’” (Benthien, 1984, 59). Tourism studies followed separate paths in West and East Germany. At that time, the leisure industry in the communist German Democratic Republic: GDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik: DDR) operated under state’s control. Tourism research was in a different tack to the West. The concept was more in economic landscapes and the state-regulated system of production and consumption (Kreisel, 2004).

Wegener (1929) tackled the issue concentrating on different geographical regions (Hopfinger, 2007, 1). These first publications and studies were still rather descriptive and usually focused at the destinations places of tourism. But also new ideas were developed which silently criticized the first attempts of tourism studies. In the 1950s it was Klöpffer (1955) who argued, that the tourism studies are mainly space related and thus a topic of geography. He further plead that not only the destination places should be considered but also the places of origin of tourists (Jurczek, 2007, 28). Since 1960 the tourism geography was accepted as an independent sub-discipline within geography. The main topic of interest were the space-related dimensions of recreation and tourism in a wider context of societal transformation. Since the very beginning it was considered as interdisciplinary discipline due to various cross-cutting issues (social and cultural science, economics, environmental studies etc.). The first approach like described above was to describe and explain changes and developments of mainly space-related tourism processes and phenomenon.

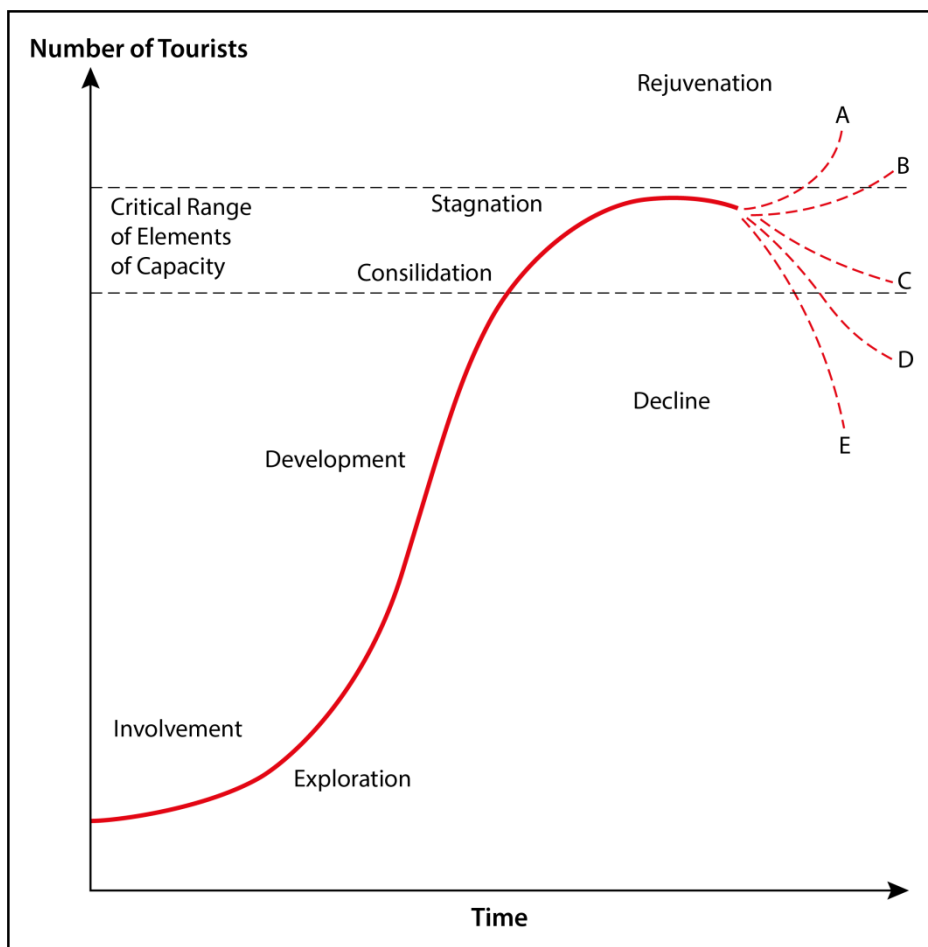


Fig. 8: Product life cycle of tourism
(Source: (Butler, 1980))

Since the period of 1960s, several concepts had been developed to describe and explain the tourism and leisure behavior of humans. At that time, scholars of social geography argued that leisure activities has to be seen in a strong position of the concept of *basic functions of human existence*. The studies on traditional geography of tourism related closely to urban geography and more intensive to analyze the residential environment as leisure area (Becker et al., 1984). "*Specific studies dealing with the burden of leisure activities for communes in a short distance from big cities helped to understand the need for financial compensations in favour of such districts*" (Becker et al., 1984, 39). However, beside the close link between urban life and recreation activities also other aspects of tourism and leisure were discussed. On important aspects which was discussed was the role of distance. Location-oriented theories like such of Walter Christaller were used to explain the leisure and travel patterns. The central hypotheses was, that locations far away from central places and industrial agglomerations are most suitable for tourism and recreation. This concept can be described as center-periphery approach and scientist following this theory like Kaminske (1977), or Yokeno (1968, 1974) explained tourism with a gradient of distance of tourism flows. Another attempt to understand tourism pattern was the product life cycle of tourism destinations based on the neoclassical perspectives of Rostow (Hopfinger, 2007, 6). According to the product cycle of tourism, touristic places and destination experience a typical sequence of development. First the discovery and emergence of a touristic place, followed by a period of development and growth. After it the place will experience a period of consolidation followed by a critical stage, where the future tourism development will be determined; ranging from a rejuvenation, stagnation to decline of tourism in that particular area (see figure 8). Critics were brought forward from scholars of dependence theory. Britton 1982 and Opperman 1993 for example scrutinized the role of tourism as universal remedy for economic development (Hopfinger, 2007, 6). The discussion on the question in how far tourism can be seen as measure to overcome socio-economic inequalities (center vs. periphery) is of particular interest for this study which focuses on the situation in Thailand and Laos (southern Thailand as touristic center vs. I-san and southern Laos as peripheries) and the transformation of peripheries after the opening of the borders. Mose (1998) focused on another aspect of tourism and economic growth by describing the growth compulsion of tourisms and the resulting negative impacts on the landscape. He described tour-

ism as “*Landschaftsfresser*” (landscape devourer). With the appearance of mass tourism – the first Jumbo Jet started to operate in 1969 – it became clear that the dominating positive perspective on tourism at the time needed to be scrutinized. More and more negative impacts of tourism were also observed and be taken into account. Since the late 1980s a new buzz word of sustainable tourism emerged. One example is the so-called “*travel star*” (Reisestern) a scale for the sustainability of tourism (Hopfinger, 2007, 723).

While there has been a strong economization of tourism geography since the 1960s³⁶ also perspectives of social science were introduced to the tourism geography. Influenced by the critical rationalism and the Münchener Schule the social aspect of tourism was increasingly examined (Hopfinger, 2007, 9). In general an opening of tourism studies could be observed. “*During the 1980s and 1990s, tourism studies broadened across a wide range of academic interests and disciplines. There was a general move to a more empirical ‘knowledge-based’ orientation (...) and, among planners, to a wider, more holistic planning process*” (Harrison/Schipani, 2007, 195). As stated in the encyclopedia of tourism four approaches are applied to investigate geographical work on tourism which are: human-environment interaction, spatial analysis, regional synthesis and physical processes (Wall in Wall, 2000, 249) .

Geographical approaches to tourism have been interested in the movements of people, the locations and tourism areas, the changes that tourism bring to the destinations, dispersion of tourism development as well as social and cultural impacts. Tourism geography further deals with land use, economic, demographic and societal impacts. Most papers on tourism recognize that the definition and interpretation of concepts of tourism has been influenced by geographical, economical, political, sociological approaches. “*The term travel and tourism are often interchanged within the published literature on tourism, though they are normally meant to encompass the field of research on human and business activities associated with one or more aspects of the temporary movement of persons away from their immediate home communities and daily work environments for business, pleasure and personal reasons*” (Hall/Page, 1999, 68). The five main aspects associated with the concept of tourism are: a) The movement and the stay of people to different destinations, which encompasses b) The journey to each destination and the activities at destination; c) The journey, stay and activities take place outside everyday life and work; d)

³⁶ e.g. Böventer’s (1988, 1989) theory of tourism based on exclusively economic factors; Vorlauffer (1993, 1994) with his papers on the globalization of tourism.

The journeys and stays are only temporary and people will return to their homes within a short-term like few days, weeks or months; e) The purpose of visit to destinations are not permanent residence or employment within the places visited (Hall/Page, 1999).

In recent years, tourism as well as development studies have focused on the benefits that tourism might bring to local communities. These recent studies focus on a number of research issues such as: human mobility, crisis management, conservation and biodiversity, destination planning and tourism management, regional development, international business, poverty reduction, and global environmental change. This study can be ranged into this broad field of tourism studies by investigating the movements and flows of the tourists who traveled to destinations in southern Laos and the I-san region in Thailand and in particular the developments of the tourism after the opening of the borders. The latter aspect leads to a new phenomenon of transnational tourism. The new patterns of tourism lead on the one hand to advantages and on the other hand to disadvantages for the destination places, its inhabitants and the different stakeholder of the tourism sector. From an economic point of view the advantages of tourism can be described through the generation of employment, increasing income and raise the country's economy level. But to understand the tourism also the motives, behavior, and perceptions of the tourists themselves need to be understood. Only if demand and supply meet each other a sustainable tourism can develop. There for not only tourists need to be examined but also the other stakeholder like tour operators, tourism entrepreneurs and the local communities. Successful tourism development needs a balance between access, demand and, supply. This issue will be talked in the following chapter.

3.2 Access, traffic, demand and supply – the theoretical approach of the study

Within the geographical studies, tourism and travel are acknowledged as two independent terms which are used separately or together to describe three concepts: a) the movement of people; b) a sector of the economy; c) a wider system of interacting relationships of people including their need to travel away from home communities and services that try to provide the needs by supplying products (Chadwick in Hall/Page, 1999, 68). The essential questions of the tourism research has always been the destination places and the question where and why did tourists seek to travel? What factors influenced their travel behavior, their choice of destination, itineraries and activities? What induces people to go away from home to visit other places and distant countries (Loker-

Murphy/Pearce, 1995)? Such questions were not least central questions which are linked to the topics of geography. Issues of spatial interaction and further geographical questions for example were discussed in the sub-discipline of tourism geography (see also chapter 3.1): where do tourists go; when do they travel; and how do they travel? In addition to that the spatial concepts are crucial to understand the manifold tourism phenomenon in terms of the patterns that tourism shows, but also with regard to the impacts of tourism and the strategies of tourism development and management of mass tourism. To study the tourism demand, an empirical study has to analyze the tourism development, and the question who advocates the destinations, and what attracts the customers in the market, the tourists.

*“Für das wirtschaftliche Wachstum unterentwickelter Länder ist die Verbesserung des Zugangs zum Landesinneren durch den Ausbau eines Verkehrsnetzes mit ein entscheidender Faktor gewesen“*³⁷ (Taaffe et al., 1963, 341). Transportation is an important part of everyday life and it is also very important on a national level. The ability of a country to develop its economic potential is linked to the efficiency of its transport sector. Access and the well maintained opportunities of transportation help to integrate and link the different regions of a country and to enable the exchange of resources, goods and commodities but also people and therewith tourism. Thus access is a central precondition for the development of tourism and to inverse the argument *“The lack of a traffic infrastructure turned out to be the main obstacle for the economic development (...)”* (Gebhardt, 1987, 212). Transport infrastructure is therefore a major factor for tourism development. As described above the improvement of road construction and the opening of the borders, they resulted in overall benefits for tourism for example in Southeast Asian countries because it improved the access to destinations. New road connections and travel regulations can improved the access to new destinations and thus an unexploited touristic potential can be used.

The question of access also plays an important role for this study. The improvement of transport facilities and services were a major factor for Laos PDR, a country with no access to the sea, and with a railway system disconnected into the Thai railway system. In order to create new tourism sector or new tourism destinations, a country needs to provide access to the attractions and the tourist sites, even when their location is remote

³⁷ English translation: “In the economic growth of underdeveloped countries a critical factor has been the improvement of internal accessibility through the expansion of a transportation network”.

(Prokkola, 2008). Improved access is on the one hand an important benefit for the country's economy (increasing numbers of visitors leads to more income opportunities) and on the other hand most infrastructure projects can only be provided by the state itself and not by the private sector (e.g. visa regulations, road construction etc.).

When looking at the studies of tourism demand and tourism supply, tourism studies usually focus on the relationship between tourism consumption (demand) and tourism production (supply). In this connection the characteristics of destinations play an important role; a systematic process framed and shaped by actions of tourism stakeholders at various levels; local, national, regional or global (Staden/Marais, 2005). In addition to that the economic stage of development, socio-political structure, availability and accessibility of natural, cultural, and human resources shape the supply of touristic offers. On the other hand tourists behavior, their perceptions and expectations are determined by changing tastes and cultural backgrounds. Thus tourism consumption in turn, change the nature of touristic demand, resulting in changing needs for tourism service provision; such as soft infrastructure (like governance system, social structure, attractions etc.); and hard infrastructure (like physical element to be developed). There is a mutual interplay between supply and demand. The different demands of tourists shape the supply of tourism and determine the type and level of infrastructure development for tourism. But also the various offers can influence and stimulate the demand of tourists (see also chapter 3.3).

At the policy level, demand factors are obviously important for the formulation of tourism policies. But also on the local level the relationship between the availability of touristic services and offers is crucial to meet the tourists' demands. To understand the interplay between demand and potential offers helps to improve the service quality of tourism and its providers and increase tourist satisfaction over a longer period of time. The latter aspect is important because the challenge behind tourism development can be a boost of tourism which is too fast. In consequence negative impacts like environmental degradation or mismanagement can lead to a breakdown of the entire tourism sector. In addition to that the tourism policy always needs to take into account in how far the satisfaction of the tourists affects tourism development and its multifarious stakeholders. How satisfying the tourism development is, depends on all the different perspectives and views of the actors, the provision touristic supply and a suitable infrastructure

(Hitchcock et al., 2009, 52-55). This is especially important for emerging destinations with a new market for tourism.

However not only the superior background is important but also the individual behavior of each tourist with his motives and behavior (Cooper, 2008, 15). To understand human activities related to tourism or travel, the interaction between the desire to undertake leisure activities and the opportunities and offers to take part of them need to be explored (Hall/Page, 1999). According to Coppock and Duffield (1975) it is important to recognize the interrelationship between human demand or desire to engage in tourism activities, and the supply of resources, facilities and opportunities which enable such demand to be satisfied. Therefore the concepts of demand and supply have been developed and applied to the tourism industry, where a person has chosen to consume the product of travel experiences. Hall and Page suggested that most research had examined effective demand which refers to the actual participation rather than to a latent demand. This demand as well as the actual participation in tourism activities is according to the literature also related to the personal and societal background of the tourist. Argyle (1996) argues that the reason for undertaking leisure activities can be found in the process of socialization and personality traits. Influences in childhood such as parents or friends were forms of social influence that affected future activity choice. Personality factors influenced preferences and interests of travel forms. In other words, factors that motivates persons to undertake leisure experience was an innate or socialized form of motivation.

3.3 The analytical framework

This study with the topic of transnational tourism concentrates on the developments of tourism in Southeast Asia especially after the opening of the borders of former communist countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the last decades. In the following the analytical framework of this study is presented (see Fig. 9).

The analytical framework of this study on transnational tourism consists of three main components: a) the tourist generating regions, b) the destinations and c) the different stakeholders from the tourism sector which provide touristic services and offers. These three components are complemented by the concept of the relationship between *demand and supply* on the one hand and the question of *access and accessibility* on the oth-

er. Thus, as visualized in the framework transnational tourism only takes place when a demand meets a suitable supply and when the access to the destinations and tourism places is enabled (see Fig. 9).

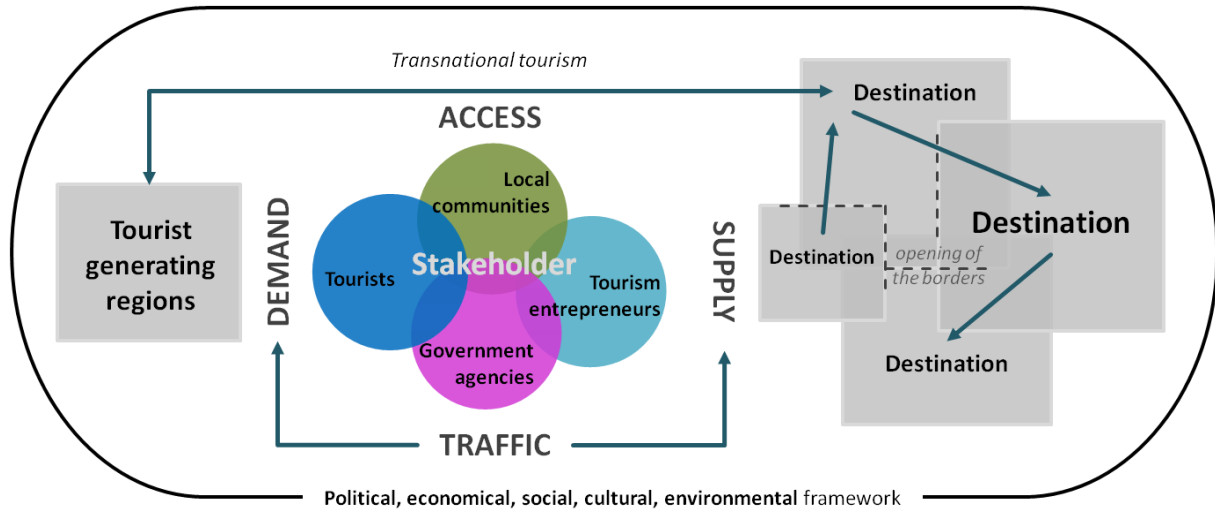


Fig. 9: The analytical framework on transnational tourism
(Source: own draft modified from (Leiper, 1979, 404))

Tourists, as the actors in *demand* for recreation and holidays, come to the tourist destination from all over the world with a variety of different interests, motives and individual plans. Based on the empirical results of this study, tourists were divided into two groups; international tourists and Thai tourists, each group with different motives and demands. One aim of this study was to explore the differences in the perceptions, expectations and demands of the different types of tourists which can be observed (see research question three in chapter 1.2). Chapter 7 and 8 will present the results from this study and describe and analyze the different demands and motives of transnational tourism in Southeast Asia.

The *supply* side covers all elements related to the provision of facilities for tourists. The first important element of tourism supply is the destination itself, with its specific natural and cultural attractions. Facilities and public supplies are also essential when it comes to hosting tourists from all over the world and to be a convenient destination and meet the tourists demands. As the empirical part of this study will show, accommodation and foodservice are also key offers. Many of the tourism entrepreneurs invest a lot of money in this core sectors of tourism. However, the carrying capacity of each destination should not be neglected. This issue is in particular of importance when a destination is confront with a very high number of visitors. But also the transportation

is an important sector of tourism because it provides and enables the access to the destinations and tourists attractions. This leads us to the aspect of access.

Access and traffic relate to those factors that help travelers to reach their places of destination. These factors of access can be physical ones such as roads, infrastructure and transportation opportunities or non-physical factors such as the availability of information or the rules and regulations at the destination countries such as visa regulations etc. These factors of access determine and shape whether tourism is taking place in a specific region and which directions the tourists take. The opening of the borders between many countries in Southeast Asia in the last decade resulted in more diverse travel route and a shift in the attractiveness of destinations for tourists. Transportation and route connections are key elements which open up more entry alternatives into the countries and means of transportation to organize the journey. The quality of physical accessibility leads to tourist flows which depend on the access to particular destinations. Moreover the distribution and promotion of tourist information, service points, signs or any other means of orientations and information are necessary for tourists to effectively plan their trips. Since the decision to undertake a journey usually starts in the countries of origin of tourists, it is also important to make information about the destination available in potential tourist generating regions, be it through media presence (internet, newspapers, television) or through coverage in popular guide books such as Lonely planet.

The tourist *generating regions* are typically regions where the economic situation allows the population to undertake holidays in other countries. This ability depends on different aspects like time (the length of holidays) and money (e.g. income, vacation pay etc.). These factors also determine the way and manner of tourism, for example whether people prefer short package holidays or long individual trips. Thus the political, economic and socio-cultural context in the tourist generating regions influences the tourism phenomenon itself. Like presented in chapter 8 there were two major types of tourist generating regions which played a role for this study. On the one hand there is a constant westernised demand from Europe and North America for long-haul journeys to destinations in Southeast Asia which is considered as “exotic” but safe and accessible without big effort. On the other hand the regional tourism between Asian countries has risen considerably in the last decades. More and more tourists mainly from Thailand but also

from China discover the neighboring countries as attractive destinations for holidays or weekend trips.

The *destinations* of tourism are typically countries or regions that attract tourists due to their beautiful natural setting (e.g. the Alps, the African savannas, or the beaches and underwater worlds in Thailand) or further attractions such as cultural and historical sites (e.g. the pyramids in Egypt, Khmer temples in Cambodia) or attracting superlatives and modern architecture (e.g. Dubai the modern metropolis in the desert). Especially for longer trip from western countries, tourists do not often come to visit one particular attraction but rather want to get to know a whole region of different countries (see Fig. 9 above). The typical destinations in Southeast Asia are Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and more recently also Myanmar (see chapter 1.1).

Another important element for the constitution of tourism practices are the different *stakeholders* with their perceptions, motives and agencies. On the supply side, the main stakeholders are *tourism entrepreneurs* who offer travel services. These include tour operators, hotel or guesthouse owners, or actors in the foodservice sector. Stakeholders typically develop strategies to adapt their supplies to the demands of the tourists, e.g. by offering a wide range of different options from high to low budget, weekend or short trips to extended holidays or long-time expeditions. On the demand side, stakeholders are identical to the *tourists* who travel to a given destination. Other stakeholder include persons from the *local communities* who are often indirectly impacted by tourism but also directly if the tourism sector provides employment opportunities.

All these different stakeholders act within a specific cultural, political, and social background. This wider framework (see Fig. 9) also has an impact on the type and direction of tourism itself. For example the tourism policy has an important impact on the development and regulation of tourism in the respective country. Therefore it is also essential to include the governance level into consideration (see chapter 4.4).

Each study has to face the question how to collect the right data in order to be able to answer the research questions and to draw plausible analytical conclusions. The following chapter will tackle this question by presenting the methodological approach of this study.

4 Research Methods

The empirical part of the study uses a mix of field surveys as well as quantitative and qualitative methods. These methods were applied to gather information about three dimensions of tourism in northeastern Thailand and Southern Laos: First the changed infrastructural conditions for tourism in northeastern Thailand and Laos, second the travel behavior, perceptions and expectations of different tourist groups (distinguishing in particular between Thai and Western tourists) and third the strategies and perceptions of different tourist groups by people working in the tourism industry.

4.1 Research design: exploring the relations between supply and demand in transnational tourism

The main focus of the study has been on empirical work in Thailand as well as Laos. Most of the field research was conducted over several cycles beginning from 2006 to 2010. The author's intercultural background made it possible to conduct interviews with both international tourists as well as domestic tourists in order to compare these two types of tourists. The comprehensive quantitative survey targeting tourists was complemented with qualitative interviews with tourism stakeholders and other experts. By doing so, tourism entrepreneurs, governmental agencies and experts of tourism development could contribute to the understanding of the changes and developments of tourism in Laos and Thailand. In addition to that, 'grey' literature, documents and statistics from different organizations were also included in the analysis.

4.2 Explorative field trips and selection of the study sites

In order to get an overview over the tourism conditions and actual and recent changes within the tourism infrastructure (in particular road network and travel conditions, accommodations and access to tourist attractions) several field trips were conducted in preparation of the quantitative and qualitative surveys. A focus during these trips lay on the question, which travel connections are (conveniently) possible within the regions, whether these are used and how their condition changed over time. During these field trips, three main touristic travel routes in the region were covered: The first route within southern Laos; started in Ubonratchathani, northeastern Thailand, led to Pak Se, in Champasack province and continued through Salavan, Xe Kong and Attapue provinces

in southern Laos. The second route started from Attapue province (Laos), passed the border to Vietnam to reach Kon Tum province. The third route started from Arunyaprathet district (Thailand), led to the border area Poi Pet in Cambodia and continued to Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville. Overview of the study area is presented in Fig. 10, details on tourist destinations and highlights will be presented in Chapter 5. The explorative field trips in consecutive years covered the areas as followed (see Table 2).

Table 2: Explorative field trips
(Source: personal expedition)

2006 (October)	2007 (April)	2007 (May)	2007 (June)
Ubonratchathani (Thailand)	Prachinburi (Thailand)	Ubonratchathani (Thailand)	Mukdahan (Thailand)
Champasack (Laos) - Pak Se - Muang Champasack - Wat Phou - Khon Phrapeng Waterfalls - Si Phan Don - Vuen Kham Checkpoint	Poipet Checkpoint (Cambodia)	Champasack (Laos)	Savannakhet (Laos)
Attapue (Laos)	Siem Reap (Cambodia) - Angor Wat	Pak Se (Laos)	
	Phnom Penh (Cambodia)	Attapue (Laos)	
		Bo-Y Checkpoint (Vietnam)	
		Kon Tum (Vietnam)	
		Gia Lai (Vietnam) - Pleiku	



Fig. 10: Overview of the study area
(Source: Volker Schniepp, 2012)

4.3 Quantitative Research Methods

The quantitative part of the study aimed at revealing the major interests and travel routes of visitors to I-san and southern Laos. The relevant tourists traveling to Southeast Asia can roughly be divided in two major groups, following a development of several stages. The first group consists of tourists from western countries, who in the early stages of tourism consisted mainly of backpackers from western countries and Australia, later followed by middle class tourists from Europe and the United States, mostly traveling individually. Another group was formed by Asian tourists, particularly the increasingly affluent Thais, which made up the main group of Asian tourists considered in this study, as well as increasingly tourists from China. Since these two major groups are characterized by very different interests and travel patterns, a questionnaire was designed in order to reveal their respective tourist behaviors, preferences and expectations.

In total, 520 questionnaires³⁸ were completed by these two groups of tourists. The respondents were selected on the basis of which attractions they were traveling to in Champasack province. For the analysis, the 269 Thai tourist and 251 international tourists who had completed the questionnaires, were compared to each other.

4.4 Qualitative Research Methods

4.4.1 In-depth interview

The qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted in the style of an open conversation. Compared to the formal and structured interviews in the quantitative study with predetermined response categories, the interviewees were open in their answers (Anderson, 2011, 101).

For the qualitative interviews, two main groups of stakeholders were considered: members of government agencies and of private (tourism) enterprises, in particular tour op-

³⁸ The questionnaires were written in English and Thai. It was comprised of three parts as followed; Part I: Socio-Demographic Data, Part II: Tourism Data, and Part III: Suggestions and Opinions. The purpose of questions was to draw out the facts and opinions that provided by tourists and their answers to be further analysed. There was a pre-test data collection tool by distributing questionnaires to 40 international tourists in Pak Se during three consecutive days. The mistakes were adjusted in terms of wording, sequencing, and structuring so that communication to the interviewees would not be biased.

erators operating from both Thailand as well as Laos, employees of tourism agencies, innkeepers and government agents both in Thailand and in Laos. The qualitative interviews focused on the question, how stakeholders perceived of the different consumption patterns of the main tourist groups within the region. All in all, twenty official interviews were conducted in a topic centered way (Mayring, 2002) during February-July in 2008 in Champasack, southern Laos and the Laotian capital Vientiane as well as in Ubonratchathani (Thailand)³⁹ The results of these were complemented by some unofficial interviews conducted during the field trips in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

4.4.2 Focus group discussion (FGD)

The quantitative and qualitative interviews were complemented with two focus group discussions with Thai and international tourists, which were used to create an open conversation over the perceptions of the tourists and their motives and demands.

Although the method of interviewing participants in focus groups has been developed in marketing research, it has been widely adapted in the social science (Anderson, 2011, 114). The focus group is an interview style designed for small groups (4 to 12 persons) of unrelated individuals, who have similar characteristics with respect to the research questions. In order to facilitate a discussion about the relevant research questions, the researcher can moderate the discussion and give impulses (Hunchangsinh, 1974, 158).

In this study, the two focus groups consisted of groups of tourists on site in Laos; in the first FGD a group of five Thai tourists and in the second of five international tourists, taking place on Don Khon Island and Don Det Island (both belonging to the Four Thousand Islands group in Laos) respectively. Participants were asked to attend a session, in which different issues related to the tourism sector were discussed.

³⁹ Interviews were conducted with four government agencies in Thailand and two in Laos: a) Tourism Authority of Thailand - Ubonratchathani office; b) Office of Tourism, Sport, and Recreation of Thailand - Ubonratchathani office; c) Ubonratchathani Municipal Office- Department of Strategy Planning; d) Custom Office at Piboon Mangsahan (Chong Mek); e) Laos National Tourism Authority - Head quarter in Vientiane; f) Laos National Tourism Authority - Pak Se Office, Champasack. Fourteen interviews were conducted within the private sectors related to tour operators and accommodation in Thailand and Laos (four from Thailand and ten from Laos).

5 The study area – people, destinations and touristic highlights

Both regions shared certain characteristics, namely located “dead end street or off the beaten tracks” of tourism activities and have experienced less growth of income from tourism than other regions, for example; in Thailand mostly the coast and islands like Phuket as well as the north landscape in Chiang Mai; in Laos mostly Luang Prabang and Vientiane. Which forms of tourism can be found in certain contexts depends on a large number of different factors. These include the historical development of tourism in a particular region (see Chapter 2.5 and 2.6), the natural resources e.g. beach, natural attractions, infrastructure such as roads, electricity, airports, etc., the evolvement of the supply structure of tourism in relation to national institutions and regulations within a country, as well as the demand structure of visitors which is dependent on their cultural backgrounds and their corresponding expectations. In order to understand, how they relate to the development of tourism in their respective countries, the areas of study in Thailand and Laos will be sketched out in the following. Furthermore, how the specific situation of tourism in I-san and Laos had evolved in this study will be presented in Chapter 7.

5.1 The touristic potential of the study area

5.1.1 General Geographical setting: Thailand

Officially named as the Kingdom of Thailand, the country formerly known as Siam is located at the center of the Indochina peninsula in Southeast Asia. It is bordered to the north by Myanmar and Lao PDR, to the east by Lao PDR and Cambodia, to the south by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia, and to the west by the Andaman Sea and the south of Myanmar. Thailand is the world’s 51st-largest country in terms of total area, with an area of approximately 513,000 km², and is the 20th most populous country, with about 66.7 million people. The country is divided into 77 provinces, each province is divided into districts and the districts are further divided into sub-districts. The capital is Bangkok, which is political, commercial, industrial and cultural hub. The population approximately 75% is ethnic Thai, 14% is Thais with Chinese origin, and 3% is ethnic Malay. The official language is Thai. Buddhism is main religious with approximately 95% of the population.

The northeastern region of Thailand, also called I-san, consists of 20 provinces⁴⁰ and represents one of the remote and poor regions of the country. The I-san is located on the Korat Plateau and determinate by the Mekong River in the east, representing the border towards Laos. The economy is dominated by agriculture even though harsh weather conditions have always been a limiting factor for the agricultural production. The population is “*composed of several ethnic and linguistic communities. The more remote areas of the border provinces contain a variety of groups in addition to Thai-Lao, such as Phu-Thai, So, Kha, Lerng, Yo and Vietnamese. The large majority of these people are farmers who until recently have had little exposure to experiences outside the village context and have remained relatively isolated from Bangkok*” (Alpern, 1975, 685). During the 1990s I-san was perceived as a “dead end street” by the majority of tourists and traveling over the borders to neighboring countries like Laos and Cambodia was not possible due to the political unrest (see Chapter 2.6.2).

5.1.2 Touristic Highlight of the I-san Region

Even though the I-san region has only slightly been explored by tourists, there is a high touristic potential in northeastern Thailand. In recent years there has been much more strategic planning and promotions, designed to stimulate tourism activities in I-san. For example, there was the most recent campaign in 2013; Amazing Thailand, Amazing Festival, to promote the country’s tourism activities. I-san was definitely included in this marketing campaign. “*The northeastern region occupies the largest land area in Thailand. The region is commonly referred to as I-san, which usually conjures up the image of an arid land area. It is one of the most traditional areas of the country and a land based on agriculture and cottage industries. The area can be one of the most wonderful destinations, especially for enthusiast of pre-historic human civilization because the region boasts several significant ancient Khmer temples. The people of I-san have a distinctive character and culture, developed largely from their style of living (...). These are the main tools to attract more tourists*”⁴¹. In fact I-san presented a variety of potential destinations to tourists. Not only has the I-san area natural and mountainous landscape, but also long time traditions and unique cultures. There are several festivals in I-san that were included in a tourism promotion campaign, for example, Rockets Festival (Bun BangFai) in Yaso-

⁴⁰ Statistics as of 31 December 2012 from Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior.

⁴¹ Tourism Authority of Thailand: <http://issuu.com/zhushman/docs/2013-thai-festivals> (accessed on 28.04.2014).

thon, International Silk Festival and Mekong Cultural Exchange in Khon Kaen⁴². Moreover, I-san has been the region of religion, where many famous and very respective Buddhist monks have settled down. This leads to tour programs tailored as a route of Dhamma to visit temples or religious and spiritual events, for instance, Wax Castle Festival in Sakon nakhon. The main touristic highlights can be separated into five different themes: from I-san resources combined with visitor interests as followed.

1. The mountains

The mountainous destinations which are well known in I-san region are, for example, **Phu Kradueng** in Loei province was the second national park of Thailand founded in 1962 which is characterized by a cast plateau comprising various Sandstone Mountains and smaller hills. The highest peak is 1,316 meters above sea level. The national park is the watershed of the Pong River and the plateau of Phu Kradueng is composed of pine forest and grassland, which have a variety of flowers, creeks, waterfalls and rocky fields. A report⁴³ of number of visitors in 2012 was 62,043. Another destination, **Phu Ruea** national park is located in Loei, one of the coolest provinces in the northeastern Thailand. It is the rugged mountain range provides the spring water for many rivers of the Loei Province. Phu Ruea is the highest peak of 1,365 meters above sea level. The landscape is covered with low shrubbery, grasslands and bizarre rock formations. The cool climate has given the area rich in orchid species throughout the year. In Loei province as well, **Phu Luang** wildlife sanctuary was a sanctuary since 1974. This mountainous area is the plateau with a cool climate throughout the year. The areas covered with a flower field on a rock plateau, and various cliffs, for a total distance of about 6 kilometers.

2. Forest destinations and Flora fields

The most famous forest and conservation area which attracted tourists to I-san is **Khao Yai** national park in Nakhon Ratchasima. It was the first national park in Thailand founded in 1962. The park comprised of mixed forests and rainforests with some wide plains and grasslands interspersed with verdant forests. There are many valuable plants, including commercial plants, scented plants and herbs. In addition, there are several

⁴² <http://www.tatnews.org/international-silk-festival-and-mekong-cultural-exchange-in-khon-kaen-thailand/> (accessed 13.12.2013)

⁴³ Reported by Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Thailand).

mountainous peaks ranging from 800 to 3,000 meters above sea level reflected Khao Yai a cool climate area also in summer. There was a report of number of visitors to Khao Yai in 2012 reached 827,589.



Fig. 11: Khao Yai National Park
(Source: own photo)

Another destination is **Pha Taem** national park and flora field. It is located in Ubon Ratchathani. The area is covered by dominant species, beautiful flowers and evergreen forests. A report of number of visitors to Pha Taem in 2012 was 106,666. There was a recent introduced destination in Bueng Kan province, **Phu Wua** wildlife sanctuary, is approximately 150-300 m. above the sea level. Some parts of the area are sandstone mountain ridges, rocky grounds and grass fields. The flora field destination of **Kra Jeaw Flora Field** at Pa Hin Ngam National Park is in Chaiyaphum province, known as one of the most famous wild fields of Siam Tulips. The forest is semi-evergreen forest mixed with deciduous forest. A report of number of visitors to Pa Hin Ngam National Park in 2012 was 82,198.

3. Historical and archaeological sites and Dinosaur wonder

I-san is known that its history began at prehistorical time. There are very famous attractions wellknown as the historical site, for example, **Ban Chiang** archeological site. It is

the UNESCO World Heritage in Udon Thani province. It is best known for its archaeological wonders, the hamlet of Ban Chiang where the world's first Bronze Age civilization is believed to have flourished more than 5,000 years ago. **Phu Phrabat** historical park is also in Udon Thani featured a large number of ancient buildings and ancient objects of both prehistoric and historic times. They are mostly of Dvaravati, Lop Buri, and Lan-chang style. Phu Phra Bat Historical Park covers the entire area of the Phra Phutthabat Bua Bok which is around 1,200 acres. In addition to the beautiful landscape, caves and caverns, rocks of different sizes and shapes dot the area. Moreover, pre-historic paintings over cliff faces have been discovered.

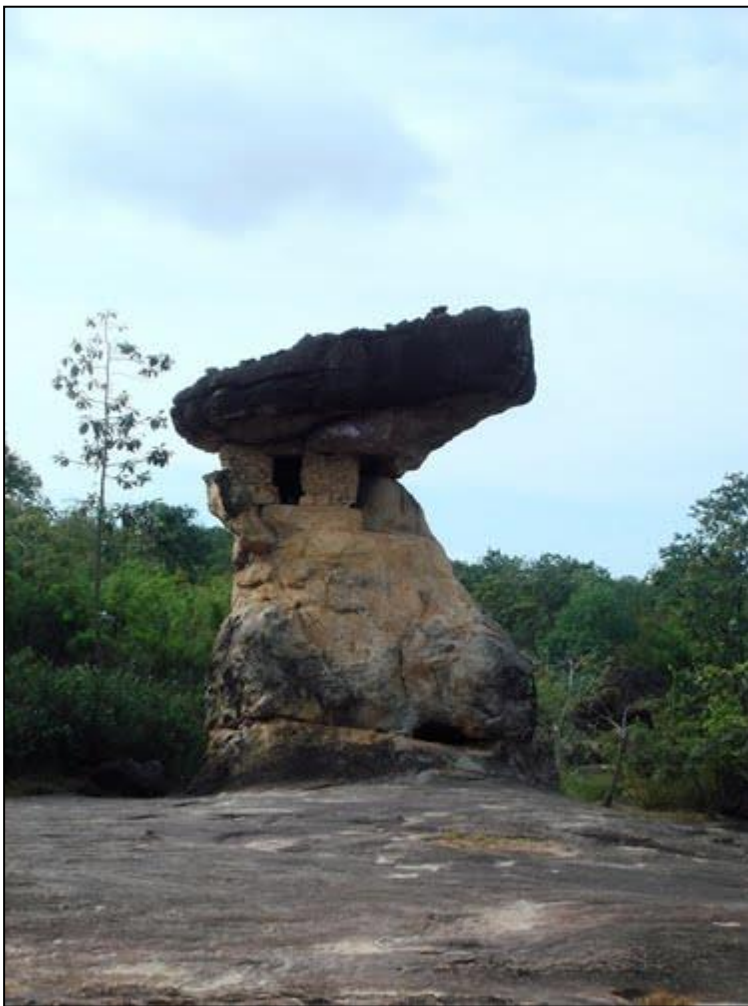


Fig. 12: Phu Phrabat historical park
(Source: <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/47465616.jpg>)

Noen Muang ancient town in Khon Kaen, the hill known as Non Muang was the location of an ancient town. Acquiring a 216 hectare area, the oval hill has double moats. Archaeologists have found sandstone Sema boundary markers in Dvaravati style in the town and nearby. Potsherds were scattered around. Some were painted in red, and some dec-

orated with incising and cord-marked patterns. In the soil layer of the Dvaravati period (7-11th century), none of the funeral-related artifacts was found. So, archaeologists presumed that the funeral of this town changed after the arrival of Buddhism.

There was variety of dinosaur fossils found in I-san areas, as assumed that started from prehistoric time. Those turned to the highlights of I-san attractions in present time, for example, ***Dinosaur Fossils*** in Kalasin. Kalasin contains the largest concentration of Jurassic era dinosaur fossils in northeastern Thailand, located in Phu Kum Khayo where archaeologists have excavated whole fossils of Sauropods. Another ancient site located near Kalasin is Fa Daet Song Yang. Excavations there have revealed several remnants and artifacts of monuments and temples that provide evidence of prehistoric inhabitation. According to archaeological evidence, the area was once inhabited by the Lawa tribe, whose Lavo civilization dates back about 1,600 years.

Phu Wiang Dinosaur Museum, in Khon Kaen, since the first dinosaur fossil was found, dinosaur fossil exploration at Phu Wiang has seriously commenced. In 1981 a Thai-French fossil exploration group to investigate other dinosaur fossils in Phu Wiang district. The geologists have found fossils of a dinosaur, 15 metres high with a long neck and tail. This is a kind of plant-eating dinosaur never found elsewhere before, so it was named *Phuwiosaurus Sirindhornae* to honour H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

4. Places of the Khmer Civilization

There were stone ruins in northeastern Thailand with influenced from Khmer (modern day Cambodia) that became major tourist attractions known as important Khmer temples. The very famous, for example, ***Phanom Rung Historical Park*** in Buriram province is a grand and majestic Khmer site over a thousand years old. Built on an extinct volcano, it is originally a Hindu religious site and later became a Buddhist one. During the 15th-18th Buddhist century, several additions were made. Prasat hin Phanom Rung is a Hindu religious place dedicated to Shiva. Most constructions were built in the 16-18 Buddhist area, it was contemporary with Prasat Nakorn wat (Angkor Wat) which was built by King Suryavarman 2 of Khmer in the 17th Buddhist era.



Fig. 13: Phanom Rung historical park
(Source: <http://thai.tourismthailand.org/ajaxengine/upload/mod>)

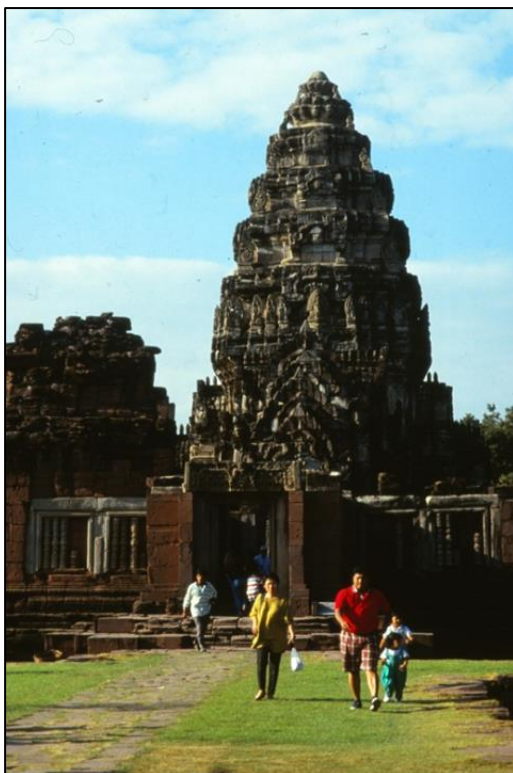


Fig. 14: Phi Mai historical park
(Source: Gebhardt, 2006)

Phi Mai Historical Park in Nakhon Ratchasima province was most likely built at the end of the 11th century during the reign of King Suriyaworaman I. The architectural style is that of the Baphuon style that prospered at the time. However, some characteristics are

similar to that of Angkor Wat, which became popular at a later period. Some additions were made to the site in the early 18th Buddhist century during the reign of King Chaiworaman VII when Phimai had close relations with the Khmer Empire. The sanctuary was always a religious site of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism because King Suriyaworaman I and King Chaiworaman VII were followers of the sect. *Prsat Hin Muang Tam* in Buriram province as well, is believed that it was built in the 15th Buddhist century. Later during the 18th-19th centuries, a stone building was built over it. From inscriptions found at the site, it is known that the sanctuary was used in the Hindu religion and later became a Buddhist site.

5. Stupas and temples

The important stupas in northeastern Thailand, for example, *Phra That Phanom*, in Nakhon Phanom, a 53-meters tall square-shaped pagoda was believed to have been built before the 12th century. The pagoda, which is believed to have originally been of Khmer design, was renovated through the years to its present Laotian design. The pagoda enshrines the holy relics of the Lord Buddha. In 1975 the entire pagoda collapsed after many days of rainstorm. The Thai public subsequently made considerable donations to rebuild the pagoda to its original splendor.



Fig. 15: Phra That Phanom
(Source: <http://www.tourismthailand.org>)

Phra That Choeng Chum, in Sakon Nakhon province, is a Lao-style stupa (called “chedi” in Thailand) erected during the Ayuthaya period and the smaller 11th-century Khmer prang beneath it. This plaster-covered brick pagoda has a square base and is 24 meters high. The chapel houses the holy Luang Pho Ong Saen. **Phra That Kong Khao Noi**, in Yasothon province, was built during the 23rd-25th Buddhist century in the late Ayutthaya period. The small and square brick pagoda has a distinctive top. The middle part has designs of doorways on all 4 sides. A brick wall surrounds the pagoda. A sacred Buddha image is behind the pagoda. Legend has it that it was built by a young farmer who was repentant after killing his mother because he was upset with hunger. The old pagoda **Phra That Bang Phuan**, in Nong Khai province, is 34 metres high and houses the holy relics of Lord Buddha. It underwent major renovation in 1976 because the original fired brick pagoda collapsed. The temple still has the old pagoda, temple boundary markers and an ancient stone inscription.



Fig. 16: Phra That Na Dun
(Source: <http://www.rd.go.th/mahasarakham/>)

Phra That Na Dun, in Mahasarakham province, is the Buddha Monthon of I-san. This is the area where historical and archaeological findings proved that the magnificence of the ancient city of Champa Si is made. The most important piece is the stupa (pagoda) encasing the holy relics of Lord Buddha in gold, silver and bronze caskets. **Phra That Sri**

Song Rak, in Loei province, is the most highly revered stupa in Loei province. The Lao-style pagoda stands 32m high built in the Ayutthaya period in 1560 as a symbol of camaraderie between Ayutthaya and Si Sattana Khanahut (Vientiane).

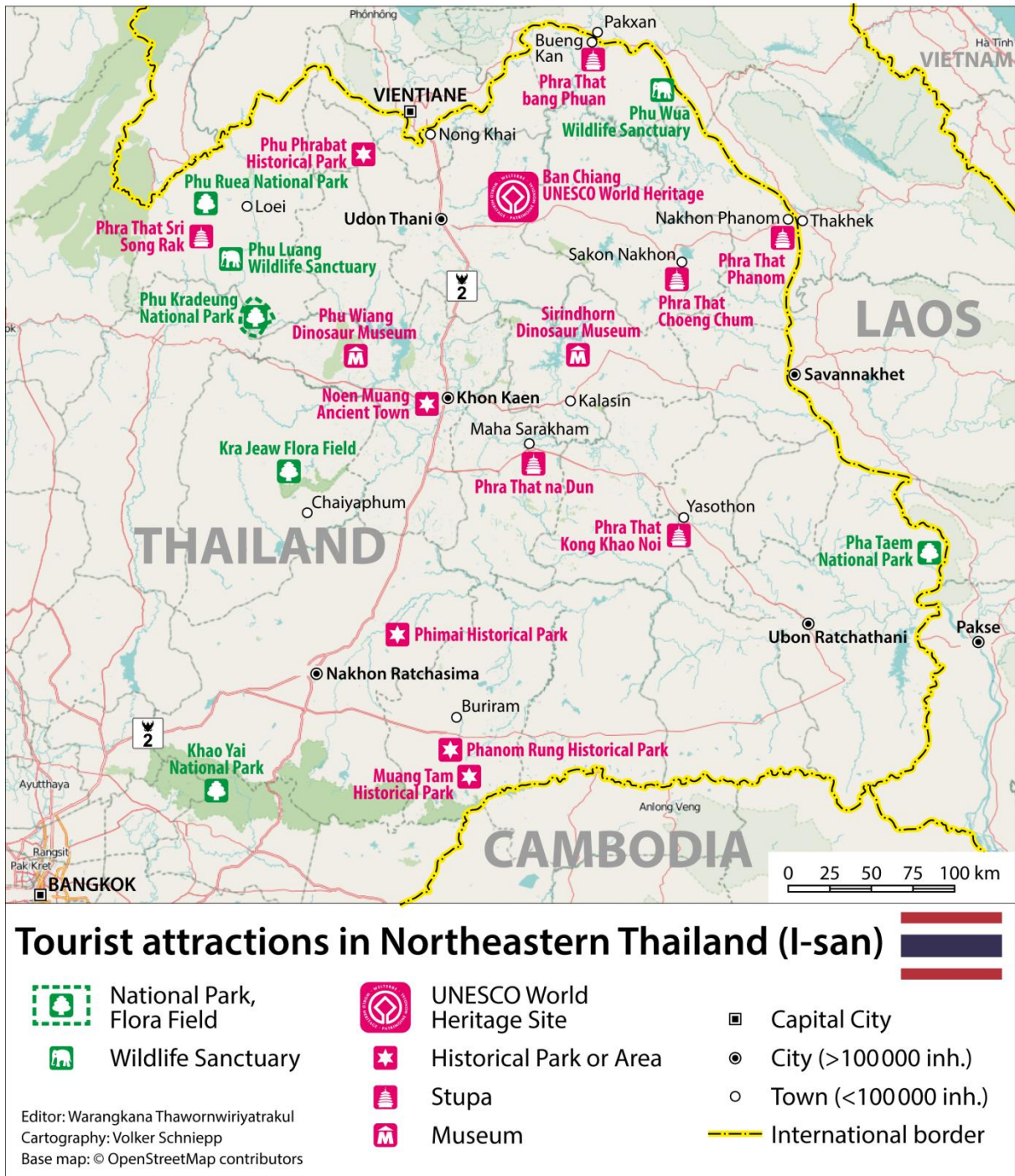


Fig. 17: Attractions in northeastern Thailand (Source: Volker Schniepp, 2012)

5.1.3 General geographical setting: Laos

The official name is Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), which located on the Indochinese Peninsula, bordered by China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. The area of 236,800 km² apart from the plains along Mekong River which marked the border of Thailand, the country is mountainous and dense forest particularly in the north. Laos in recent is spotted as the natural attractive country and being a land-link nation in Southeast Asia. *"..., economic and geography have created for it a new niche. Rich in land and natural resources, and strategically placed on a 'crossroads' linking some of the fastest growing economies in the world, it has been suggested that Laos is a key node within mainland Southeast Asia. It has been suggested that the countries surrounding Laos are bound by their dependence upon the Mekong River and Laos, lying at the heart of the Mekong, is in a position to play 'a crucial role in the success of co-operative efforts in the subregion'"* (Evans, 2000, 38).

For the southern Laos, the mountain of Phu Daen kaew lies from north to south and borders Laos and Vietnam. The Phanom Dong Rak Mountains separate Laos and Cambodia in the south. The most important river is the Mekong River which runs around 4,500 km. long and at the widest of 12 km width (Singyabuth, 2002). *"For Laos, while during the period 1975-1989 landlockness was perceived as a hindrance and constraint to national development, it is now being presented as an advantage within the context of the GMS. The GMS has, in short, become the vehicle by which the landlockness can be transformed from a national liability into a national asset"* (Evans, 2000, 39). In an effort to improve intraregional transport and maximize benefits, GMS countries had begun to adopt an approach of development in form of economic corridors. The added ease of transportation will also assist to promote the tourism sector (Yongvanit/Bejrananda, 2006). Tourism sector in Laos has become priority by 1995, particularly after Luang Prabang was promoted to the list of World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Laos' second National Development Plan published in 1999 emphasized on conventional sightseeing, eco-and adventure tourism, cross-border tourism, and domestic tourism (Simonekeo, 2010).

5.1.4 Highlights of the southern Laos

Southern Laos used to be a mysterious or faraway area for most tourists and often was overlooked or left off the itineraries due to the political reasons and limited means of transportation (see Chapter 2.6.1). After its transformation to an open economy in 1986, Laos started to promote tourism development and declared that tourism is an important tool in process of opening the country. The Lao government had identified the development, promotion, and implementation of cultural, natural and historical tourism as opportunity to faster growth. The government dedicated its efforts in developing infrastructure such as the construction of roads to link all northern, central, and southern parts of the country (LNTA, 2006).

Recently, Laos is being on a high rank of tourism destination based on natural and historical resources, distinctive art and heritage, cultural diversity, and protected area rich of biodiversity. Laos was selected as the world best destination for 2013, under the title “Laos: A touristic and cultural paradise”, by the European Council on Tourism and Trade⁴⁴. There are many historical sites, for example; the most famous Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site for outstanding cultural, historic and architectural values and its harmonious relationship between the natural and built environment, the Plain of Jars in Xieng Khouang, the war historian of Ho Chi Minh Trail, which spans the country’s eastern border with Vietnam from Khammouane down to Attapeu in the south. The case of southern Laos is similar to I-san, Laos has a great potential of further development on tourism. Despite its remoteness southern Laos offered a variety and interesting attractions to explore. There are more attractions such as the second UNESCO world heritage sites (after Luang Prabang), Wat Phou Temple Complex, including the major festival of southern Laos is Wat Phou Festival in Champasack Province, and endangered fauna and flora in the Xe Pian Natural Protected Areas with rich wetland environment and river system inhabited by some of rare migratory and endemic bird species. The highlights of Laos could be clustered as follows:

⁴⁴ <http://www.tourismlaos.org/index.php> (accessed on 14.12.2013)

1. World Heritage and Khmer Civilization

Wat Phou Temple Complex in Fig.18, and the Ancient City (Champasack) was selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2001; attractions included the ancient road and historic colonial buildings.



Fig. 18: Wat Phou
(Source: Gebhardt, 2006)

Houaytomo Khmer Temple (Champasack): a tenth-century temple's ruin also known as Oum Muang, the temple is thought to have been dedicated to the consort of Shiva in her form of as Rudani, and was discovered by the Frenchman early in the twentieth century.

2. Waterfalls

Khonephapheng waterfalls (Champasack) in Fig.19 is the largest waterfall by volume in southeast Asia, is a grand spectacle as the full volume of the Mekong River tumbles over a 15 meters drop and rapids leading to Cambodia. Li Phi waterfall noted for its cascading emerald green water. **Li Phi waterfalls** also known as Tad Somphamit, which means spirit-trap because local people believed that bad spirits were trapped here as they washed down stream. **Tad Fanee waterfall** (Champasack) is located on the edge of Dong Houa Sao National Protected Area, cascades over 100 m off the plateau. **Tad Lo Water Park** (Salavan), Tad Lo and Tad Hang Waterfalls gushing down the Xe Set River,

has ethnic villages and a conservation area, short elephant trek. **Tad Se Noi waterfall** or Tad Hua Khon (Xe Kong) is the most convenient to visit from town and offer for swimming, trekking and village visits. **Tad Saepha waterfall** (Attapue) located in the Xe Pian river, within the Xepian National Protected Area 61 km from Samakhixai District, 23 m high and 120 m wide.



Fig. 19: Khonephapheng
(Source: Gebhardt, 2006)

3. Nature and Landscape

Si Phan Don or Four thousand islands (Champasack): located in a section of the Mekong River north of the border with Cambodia, an important wetland habitat for both bird and aquatic wildlife species, most notably the freshwater endangered Irrawaddy dolphin. **The Bolaven Plateau**: known around the world as a fine coffee growing regions and accounts for nearly all of Laos' coffee production. The plateau has near-perfect growing conditions of abundant rainfall, cool temperatures, rich volcanic soil and high elevation up to and above 1,500 meters. **Coffee Cultivation of Pakxong** (Champasack) in Fig.20: The history of coffee in Laos began in around 1915, when the first coffee trees were planted by French colonists, and after many years of trial and error, successful cof-

coffee harvesting was on its way in Laos in 1930's. The specialty is the Arabica bean, one of the world's finest.



Fig. 20: Coffee cultivation of Pakxong
(Source: Gebhardt, 2001)

Xe Pian National Biodiversity Conservation Area: The first international recognized wetland of Laos and the summit of Phou Asa Mountain, which provides an impressive view over a large area of southern Laos. Established to conserve biodiversity and considered one of the most important conservation areas in Indochina, particularly for its many species of large mammals and waterfowl.

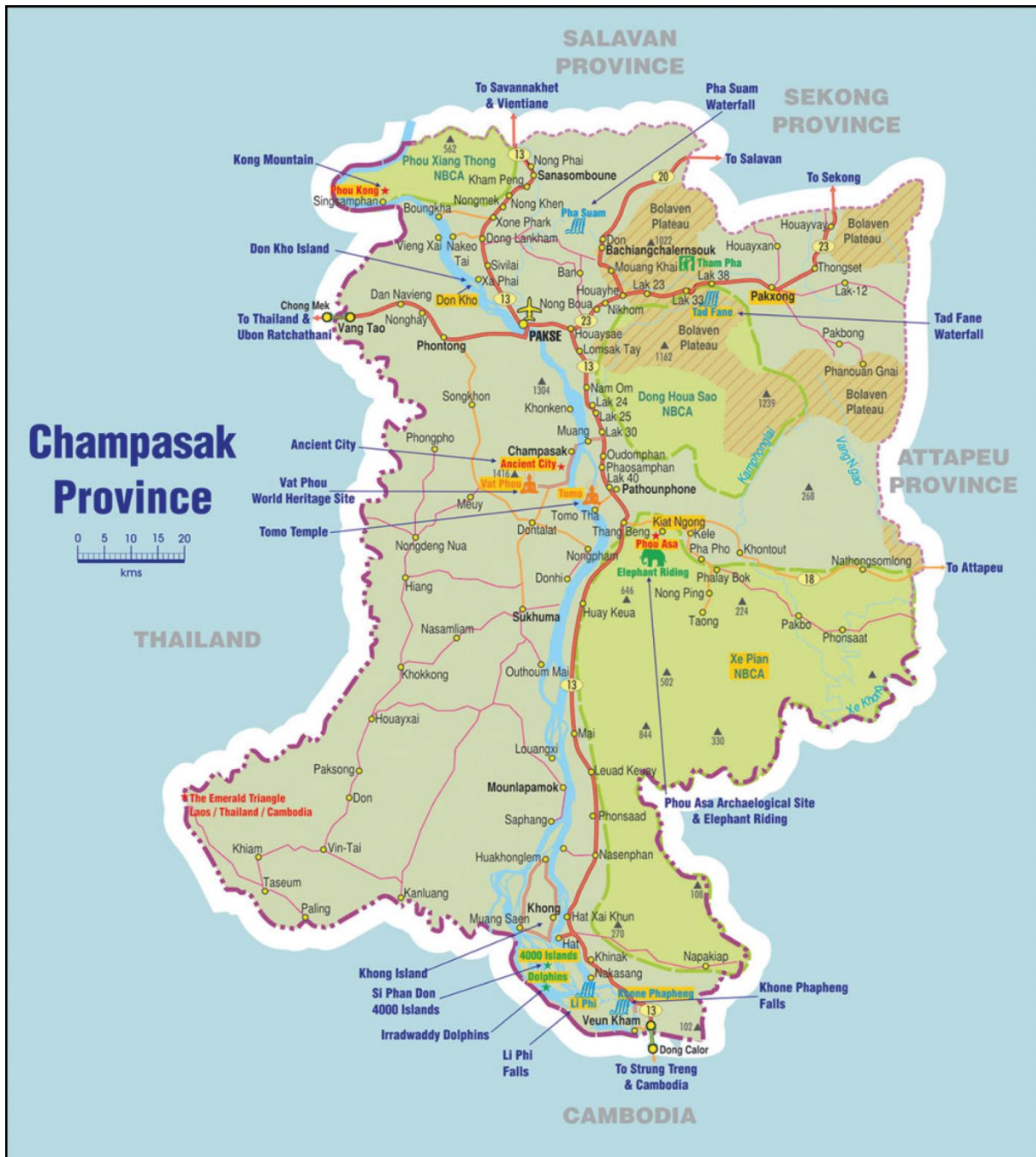


Fig. 21: Champasack attractions map
 (Source: http://www.ecotourismlaos.com/images/map/Champasack/Champasack_bg.jpg)

5.2 Stakeholders of transnational tourism in I-san and southern Laos

Tourism in Thailand started meaningful with the arrival of GIs during the Vietnam War. Thailand was successfully introduced as vacation destinations resulted from the Rest and Recreation of the GIs program. However, this also gave Thailand since then an image of the sex-capital of the East (Meyer, 1988). The number of resorts was suddenly in-

creased, after Pattaya beach was discovered by the GIs. Khaosan Road in Bangkok, at the same time, served American GIs on leave from Vietnam as well. Then in the late 1970s, Khaosan Road became backpacker's area which offered cheap food and rooms and being famous by word-of-mouth as its location closed to many Bangkok attractions; it was an ideal hub for travel. This was also supported by the publication in Lonely Planet Thailand, a worldwide guide book for backpackers (Howard, 2005). Since then the tourism sector in Thailand served mainly foreign visitors who came visit Thailand as an inbound travel. Most of tourism businesses were located in Bangkok as a center of inbound tourism. There were a few agencies opened in major provincial cities such as Chiang Mai, Phuket, Pattaya (in Chon Buri) and Hat Yai (in Song Khla). It explained that attractions for inbound package tours became more to ethnic-tribe in the north and to the islands beach attractions in the south. One of the leading tour operators who handled mass tourism packages at that time was Diethelm Travel, a Thai-Swiss joint venture which founded in 1957. Diethelm was also successful in outbound packages by arranging tours to Vietnam, Burma (at that time), Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Taiwan; also to Laos, since 1982 Diethelm was the only agency allowed to bring inbound tourists to Laos (Meyer 1988) before Laos has official opened cooperation with foreign countries in planning tourism development. Besides organized package tours, a parallel development of backpackers arose. Typical backpackers in Southeast Asia started the route with a cheap flight to Bangkok, throughout southern Thailand and Malaysia, all the ways to Singapore, eastern Indonesia, and Australia (Hampton, 2013).

Depending on the tourism development perspectives, there are various stakeholders involved appropriately in particular situations. Drawn from this study, three major stakeholder groups were approached including tourism entrepreneurs, local communities, and government agencies. With their different perceptions, motives and agencies, they were involved in the core of tourism development.

First, there are the *tourism entrepreneurs*. In this study these included various businesses, providers and operators that are directly or indirectly involved in the tourism sector. Not only had the public sectors contributed and involved in tourism development, but also the private sectors such as transportation services, accommodation providers; hotel, guesthouses, bungalow owners, and foodservice providers; restaurant, local foodservice owners played an important role at the same time. In terms of private tourism businesses, entrepreneur in Ubonratchathani focused on the potential of tour-

ism in lower I-san areas that could be extended and be connected to neighboring countries as transnational tourism in the region. For example, there are better accommodations provided in I-san compared to southern Laos, they encouraged tourists to stay overnight in Ubonratchathani with more various types of hotel and guesthouses and various range of prices. However, they did not succeed in this point as there were only a few visitors who stayed overnight in the province because they were passing through Ubonratchathani in order to take a trip in Laos. Meanwhile, tourists who traveled from southern Laos on their way to Bangkok sometimes did not stay for a night in Ubonratchathani. Nevertheless, transportation businesses considered the improvement of infrastructures and potential of a road network as new possibilities to expand services in the growth of tourism market, including expansion in transnational means of transportation in the future. From the Laos side, the point of view of private owners regarding the growth of tourism was that they appreciated it much more. For example, with the World heritage site of Wat Phou, they could benefit more businesses from the boost of tourism attractions in the southern region. Most entrepreneurs in southern Laos agreed that they tried to improve their facilities and infrastructures, for example hotels, guesthouses and restaurants in order to reach standard, in a better quality or maintain a good condition to serve tourists. This included improve in service quality by initiated cooperation and network between tourism businesses in Champasack and Vietnam entrepreneur to better serve tourists. With similar comments and expectations, private business owners wished to have more cooperation and support from the public sector in terms of policies implementation that enhance and foster tourism business in the real practice.

Second, stakeholders from *local communities*; instruments for data collection of this study also included observing at destinations of the village daily life, having a short stay in a village with one family, participating with the locals' daily activities, and visiting a village, for example, Ban Sapai weaving village in Champasack to observe the local hand-craft products, as well as joining other activities such as cooking and fishing. Local participation was indeed a main aspect for each country and also for the cooperation in the regions, in this study observed that local participation in the planning of tourism should be encouraged and involved more. Moreover, the locals living in the tourism attraction areas should be encouraged to appreciate their culture, tradition, ways of life, and natural resources and environment. Tourism is a significant part of local economy whenever it has been explored at the destination. Local employment increases following the tour-

ism growth and local communities can generate revenue from tourism. However, whether benefit from tourism really reaches the local people or whether it leaks in-between before reaching the people on the ground has to be scrutinized in each specific case. However the local community role is affected on in both ways passively and actively. On the one hand the local people are confronted with the tourists and the impacts of tourism be it positive or negative. On the other hand the local community can shape and benefit from tourism.

The third, **government agencies**, as the role of the governmental stakeholders was to initiate and implement policies for tourism development, including to promote, to plan strategies and to control the areas for security reasons, there were a number of factors contributing to the development of tourism. Of most importance is the collaboration among the various stakeholders, both private and public. In terms of tourism, improvement of tourism products and quality of service as well as government policies will result in further support for the tourism development in the destinations. Therefore, these government agencies were required to sustain tourism, for their own destinations, in each country.

In southern Laos, careful development of some tourist places is the major issue. Destinations such as Vang Vieng have become a good example of tourism spoiled and Don Det in Four Thousand Island might have learned the lesson from Vang Vieng before it became ruined in the long run. The government role should be to cover tourism safety with policy arrangements to give visitors a sense of safety and security during their trip, including health services or a medical center being available. Government agencies, involved in migration and urbanization could consider the tourism sector as a source of jobs that are available particularly in the popular destinations, these jobs could keep the locals from migrating to big cities to earn their living and therefore help to reduce migration problems. Further, the responsible authorities should protect the rights and privileges of the local communities in the development of tourism (Nguangchaiyapoom et al., 2012). The balance of people, culture, ethics, morals and tourism participants should be preserved for the future of tourism development as well as to provide a good experience for visitors.

The core idea of the stakeholder approach is to raise stakeholder awareness and meet with their requirements. Many studies in the area of tourism development have emphasized a commitment to an integrated, sustainable approach involving the views of vari-

ous stakeholders from both the public and private sectors (Hawkins, 2005). It is important to strengthen the capacity of government agencies, local communities, tourism entrepreneurs and tourists in taking actions to promote tourism development and to encourage the contribution of tourism cooperation at the regional level.

6 Accessibility and connectivity as key elements for tourism development in northeastern Thailand and southern Laos

Transnational tourism in Laos within the normal time frame of tourism (for groups 5-14 days, for backpackers longer) is only possible with the improvement of traffic facilities (new flights, access roads, overland connections etc.), especially with the improvement of the road network. Most of the roads in Laos as well as in Cambodia had been in a very poor condition till the year 2000 (sometimes not improved since French times). This situation has dramatically changed during the last 10 years. In I-san there is now a very dense network of highways connecting all major province cities within a few hours, in Laos as well as in Cambodia the old national highways had been improved with the help of international projects, organized from Japan or international funds.

6.1 The preconditions of development

The periphery of northeastern Thailand, with one-third of the area and population, remained the most backward part of the kingdom. The region was heavily dependent on agriculture both for income and employment, and had become increasingly a region of seasonal and permanent migration to the more favored areas of the kingdom (Dixon, 1977). A high proportion of I-san population had differences in ethnic, linguistic and cultural which considered to set the region apart from the rest of Thailand. *“Indeed in many respects the Northeastern has greater affinity with Laos than with the rest of Thailand. The remoteness of the region from the administrative and cultural center of the kingdom, and the barriers to communication posed by the bordering ranges had combined to preserve the regional identity of the Korat plateau”* (Dixon, 1977, 211).

Prior to 1950s, there was the period of unrest in the northeastern region which gave considerable anxiety to the administrative system, resulted in official policy concerned on developing education, administration and communication. The policy was used to absorb and draw the region into the Thai culture as the unrest was given alarm of communist influence in the northeast. *“One source has advanced the not very plausible hypothesis that governmental fears of “Communist” activity among Northeasterners at this time had arisen because of the involvement of some Northeasterners in the embryonic revolutionary activities of Vietnamese refugees in northeastern Thailand”* (Keyes, 1967, 23).

Then in early 1950s, more attention was given in order to help reduced poverty and political unrest within the northeastern region. *“The alarm shown by the Thai Government, and shared by the United States, was understandable when Laos was the center of international attention and intrigue—during the years of crisis from 1957 to the Geneva settlement of 1962”* (Girling, 1968, 390). The development policy for northeastern Thailand in 1961 to 1971 focused on infrastructure, particularly transport and irrigation. A number of foreign aid particularly from the United States had been involved. During this period Thailand received significant aid including volume of military. The most important purpose of American economic aid had been spent on roads, health, education and police administration. The primary emphasis was placed on rural development schemes in the northeastern region. During the 1960s the major U.S. military bases for operations in Indo-China were established in the northern Thailand and the U.S. personnel in Thailand was rapidly growing. These resulted in considerable developments in transport, urban, and service industry. There was an initial accessibility into the remoteness of northeastern Thailand. *“Areas that were highly remote have been exposed to the outside world by the presence of American military forces”* (Alpern, 1975, 689).

6.2 Improvement of the transport network

In the past, the journey from the capital to northeastern Thailand when the railway was first operated could take a few weeks as described in literature, *“From 1900 onwards, railways, telegraph and later roads broke down the isolation of the Korat plateau. The opening of the rail link from Bangkok to Nakorn Ratchasima in 1900 reduced the journey from two or three weeks by ox cart to one day”* (Dixon, 1977, 212).

Physical changes in Thailand in the northeastern area such as new roads, dams, etc., were almost all action from the government policy which provided support by the United States for security reasons in “sensitive rural areas”⁴⁵ in Thailand. During 1950-1957 there were large amount support dominated to both irrigation facilities in agricultural sector and roads and highways in transportation sector. There were about 160 kilometers of Route 12 in northern central Thailand improved and hundreds of bridges constructed spreading throughout Thailand. The significant project was the road with about 720 kilometers long, known as “Mitrapap” —the U.S.-Thailand Friendship Highway be-

⁴⁵ *“sensitive areas are those considered to have insurgents among the populace”* (Hunchangsith, 1974, 26).

tween Bangkok and Nong Khai near Vientiane, the capital of Laos. The transportation between Bangkok and provinces in northeastern region was made possible and more accessible. At that time the road which connected the central region with the northeastern part, the Friendship Highway was opened to help the remote areas for planting a new crops and agricultural production particularly maize production. *“Undoubtedly there can be no argument that these highways and bridges are purely used for civilian use and not designed for military purposes”* (Hunchangsith, 1974).

Geographically, Laos was dependent on Thailand for access to the sea and economically attached to Thailand for goods and services. *“Laos is a landlocked country which utilizes Thailand as the most convenient conduit for its exports and imports”* (Viraphol, 1985, 1264). The cooperation of both countries was vital for the exploitation of the resources offered by the Mekong River, the great river on which the livelihood of many people in Southeast Asia is dependent. The Mekong is not only a waterway for transportation; it is also an important source of energy and water supply and thus is of economic significance. The Mekong stands as a symbol of cooperation among the countries sharing it that cuts across ideological and political boundaries (Viraphol, 1985).

While the beginning of active preponderantly Thai uprising dated back to the early 1950s, *“the Vietnamese link with the communist insurgency movement in Thailand had been a long-term factor”* (Viraphol, 1985, 1271). This link between the communist movement of Thailand and Vietnam was revealed by stolen military documents published by the Bangkok Post on March 30, 1975. In the documents a part of the strategy of Hanoi was described with the aim to increase the level of conflict in northeastern Thailand. Moreover the North Vietnamese leader planned the establishment of a liberated area covering a 50 to 100 kilometers wide strip along the Mekong River. Particularly the area around Vientiane, the capital of Laos, should become a protectorate state of both Vietnam and Laos. *“The revolutionary goal of this insurgency is the seizure of power from the Thai government through Maoist political and military techniques”* (Alpern, 1975, 684). The insights gained from this document astonished the Thai government and Lt. General Saiyud Kerdpol, Director of the Internal Security Operations Command pointed out that *“(...) the Northeastern constitutes the greatest threat to the Bangkok Government”* (Alpern, 1975, 685). In the following years northeastern Thailand became an important security issue for the government. Physical changes in the I-san region were needed to gain better control of the security situation. New roads, dam, etc. were constructed in

order to improve the accessibility of the area. The remote I-san was exposed to the outside world by the presence of Thai and American military forces (Alpern, 1975, 689).

Since 1975, the Lao government has implemented several projects of development focusing on agriculture, forestry, industry and tourism. Based on geographical location, there are many roads that connected all provinces and province with neighboring countries. With great attention to the development and promotion of tourism, improvement of transport facilities and services are important for Lao PDR (see Fig. 23).

- In the north, road no.3 was built from the Lao-Thai border at Huaykon in Ngeun district, Xayaboury province to Pakbaeng district in Oudomxay province. Road no.7 was being built to link Luang Prabang and Vietnam.
- In central area, roads no.8, 9 and 12 being improved as part of the East-West Economic Corridor.
- In the south, road no.10, 13 and 18B connected Laos to Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- In four provinces of southern Laos which are Champasack , Salavan, Xe Kong and Attapue, there had been constructions of road no.13-South, under the plan of no.15A, no.16E, and no.18B (Leukai, 2008). While road no.15 and 16 were under construction and will connect Thailand, Laos and Vietnam (LNTA, 2006).

Moreover, the Thai and Lao governments signed an agreement in Bangkok to build a third Mekong River international friendship bridge between Khammouane province in Laos and Nakhon Phanom province in Thailand. The Thai government provided financial support to Laos for surveying, designing and constructing of the bridge and border crossing. Construction started in 2008 and the bridge was officially opened in 2011. Previous to this, the first Thai-Lao friendship bridge over the Mekong River connecting the Thai province of Nong Khai and the Lao PDR capital of Vientiane was opened in 1994. The second friendship bridge between Thailand and the Lao PDR was opened in 2007, connecting the Lao province of Savannakhet with northeastern province of Thailand, Mukdahan.

As shown in Fig.25 the number of visitors by province in Savannakhet (Laos) started rising up significantly in 2007 and continued in 2008 till 2010. A similar development

can be found in Fig.26, which showed that the tourist arrivals by port of entry increased at Savannakhet airport as well. Both could be explained as a result from opening of the second friendship bridge which allowed visitors to make more convenience accessible either from Savannakhet in Laos to Mukdahan in Thailand or in another direction from Thailand to Laos. In addition to Fig.26, it shows in Fig.27 higher percentage of tourist arrivals at both friendship bridges in 2010.

Moreover, the second Thai-Lao friendship bridge helped promoting economic development and to facilitate transportation, trade, investment, and tourism, not only between Thailand and Laos, but also facilitating trade and tourism with central Vietnam. In addition, Lao government had planned to build three more bridges across the Mekong River in 2010.

The first bridge linked Pakkhone, Nan district in Luang Prabang province and Thadeua in Xayaboury province; it was opened in 2013. The second bridge will connect Sana-kham district in Vientiane province with Paklay district in Xayaboury province; it was expected to open by the end of 2013. The third project was opened in 2013 to connect Hauysai district in Bokeo province with Chiang Khong in Thailand, and will be part of the superhighway connecting Bangkok, Thailand and Kunming, China.

From 1975 until 1986, the Laos economy was centrally planned and private ownership existed in limitation. By 1986 the Laos government introduced the new economic management system which aimed to turning Laos into an open-market economy. *"This was to be achieved by the re-introduction of private enterprise, independence of state enterprises, prices determined by the market, wages according to performance, foreign investment, tourism from aboard, and so on"* (Radetzki, 1994, 800). In the past, as the disconnection of a railway system into the Thai railway line and with no access to the sea, Laos depends on its road network for major links to neighboring countries. However, many routes are still in quite poor condition even though the roads have been significantly improved in quality in the last two decades.

The improvement of road constructions and the opening of the borders resulted in decreasing time of traveling through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The investigation of this study showed time of traveling in comparison between 1990s and 2000s.

For example, traveling from Bangkok (Thailand) to Hue (Vietnam) via Mukdahan (Thailand), Savannakhet (Laos) through border check point at Lao Bao to reach Hue in 1990s,

it took 26 hours on land transportation (by bus). While in 2000s, it is able to make the trip within 17.5 hours to arrive this destination.

Another example, in 1990s from Bangkok (Thailand) to Phnom Penh (Cambodia) via Ubonratchathani (Thailand), Chong Mek Thai-Lao border checkpoint, Pakse (Laos), through Lao-Cambodian border at Vuen Kham, Stoeng treng and Kracheh (Cambodia) and reaching Phnom Penh in 23 hours. It was reduced to 14.75 hours in 2000s.

The third example was from Bangkok (Thailand) to Play Cu (Vietnam), in 1990s it took about 30.5 hours to travel from Bangkok via Ubonratchathani (Thailand), crossing Thai-Lao border at Chong Mek to Pak Se (Laos), through Attapue (Laos) and across Lao-Vietnamese border at Bo-Y to Kon Tum and Play Cu in Vietnam. In this route, the improved road transportation from Pakse to reach Attapue in 2000s helped reduce time of travel from 6 hours to 3 hours. There were a few of hotels, guesthouses and restaurants including infrastructure and tourism facilities in Attapue at the time of investigation in 2006. Very few tourists visited this province yet there were some business traveler who regularly passed by and stayed overnight (see Fig. 22).

Attapue is the most southern province of Laos that considered as a gateway to enter central region of Vietnam at Bo-Y checkpoint. From this border, visitors are able to travel to Kon Tum and Play Cu provinces in Vietnam.

A well managed road network is seen as a prerequisite for economic growth of each country. Transport also helps integrate the country nationally and regionally, it increases opportunities for tourism and trade, as well as it facilitates the integration of all people. *"... the accessibility of a destination clearly influences its attractiveness and visitor potential"* (Schiefelbusch et al., 2007, 95). In the past, there was only local road transportation that can be considered as outdated. Transportation extends beyond the borders of neighboring countries. In Laos, as a member of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) which includes Burma, China, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam; where transportation of goods and people across these countries, the cross border transportation as a major infrastructure was being developed. The Lao government had declared the implementation, development and promotion of cultural, natural and historical tourism as to encourage the growth in tourism and other service sectors (LNTA, 2006). The construction of Mekong bridges, the improvement and new construction of roads access to tourism

attractions, basic facility system such as electricity and water supply, and airports and aviation links to tourist cities of neighboring countries have also been developed.

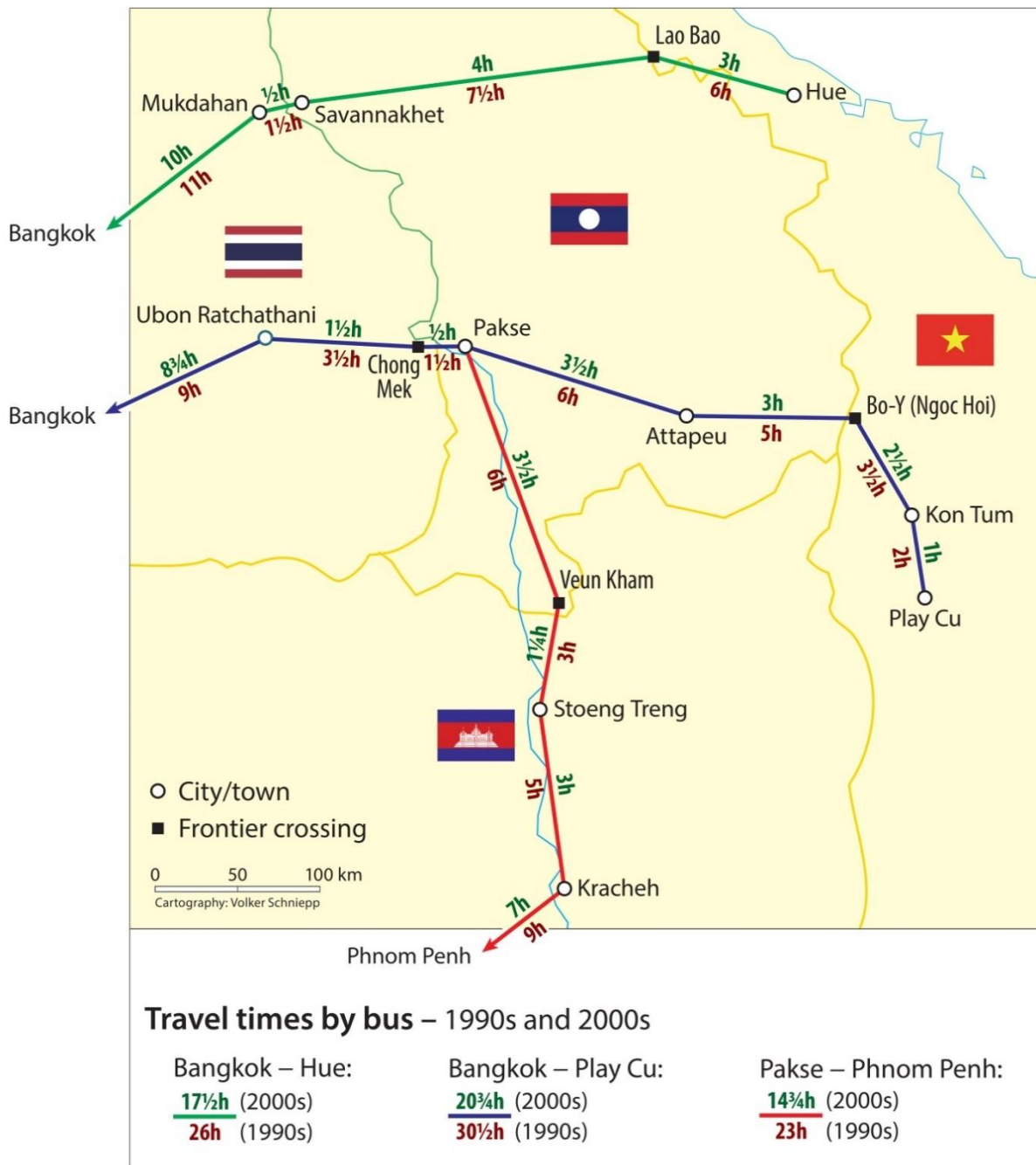


Fig. 22: Travel times by bus - 1990s and 2000s
(Source: own investigation; Cartography: Volker Schniepp)

The improvement of road constructions and the opening of borders resulted in more benefits to tourism in Southeast Asian countries. In terms of tourist routes, new road connections have made many new routes and destinations possible. There are some connecting routes in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. In the central areas of Laos,

the focus is on upgrading road no.9, 12 and 8 as part of the East-West Economic Corridor. In the south, road no.13, 10 and 18B link Laos to Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. In four provinces in southern Laos which are Champasack , Salavan, Xe Kong and Attapeu, the plan to develop infrastructure supported by many international financial institutions to serve the tourism sector, has been the construction of road no.13 South, no. 15A (on planning), no.16E, no. 18B. Road no.15 and 16 were under construction and will connect Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. (see Fig. 23).

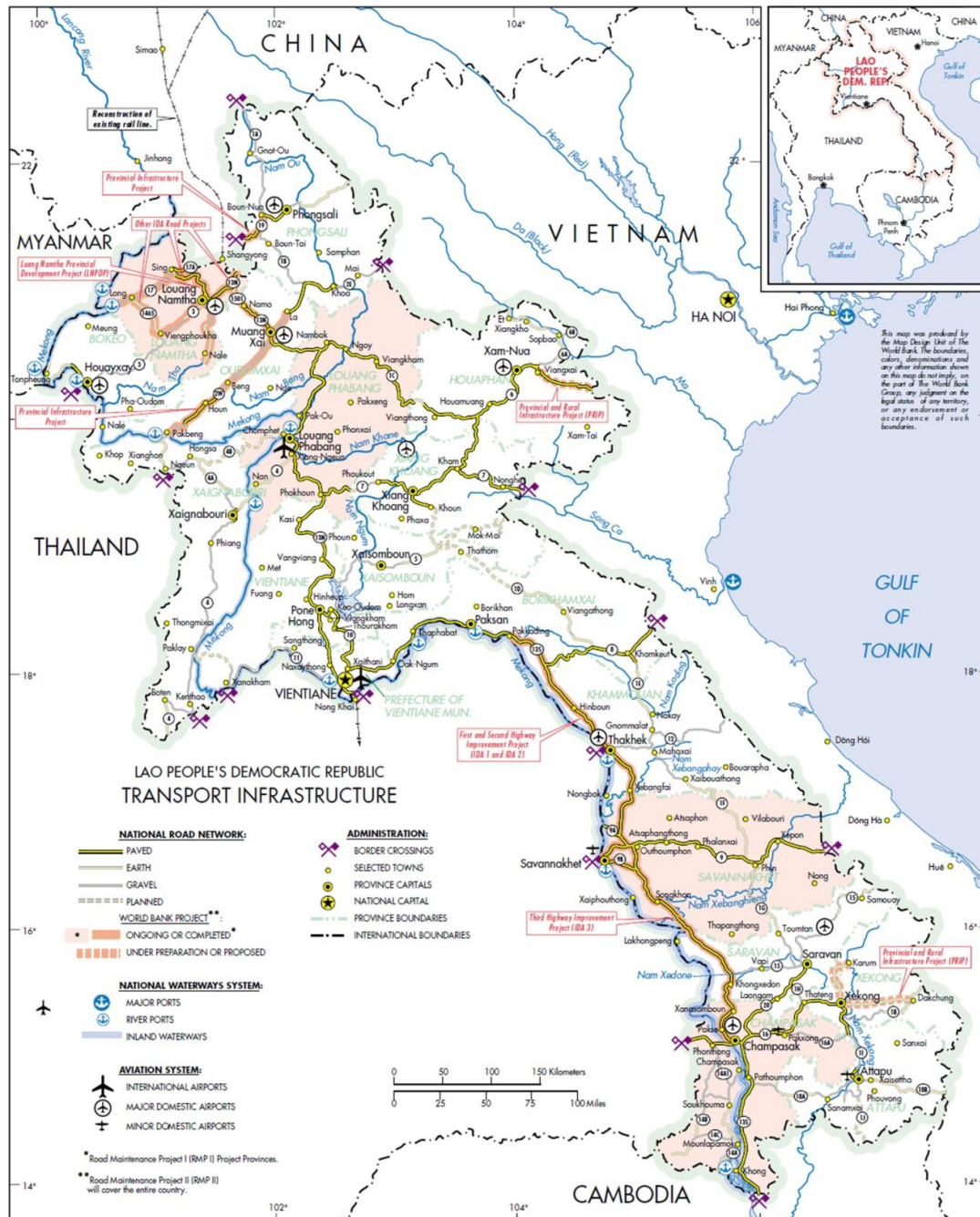


Fig. 23: Lao PDR's Transport Infrastructure
 (Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/transport/transportresults/regions/eap/eap-lao-output.pdf>)

It is clearly that the improvement of roads and infrastructure is very important factor for tourism destinations. Not only the improvement of road network, but also the reduction of traveling time has influenced the time-space-relations. This means the connectivity between the regions grows at the same time of when the time for transport and traveling shrinks. These are direct effect on tourism sector on one hand, and on the others on the population itself. The impact as a positive one to help develop tourism distributed to local people at any destinations as well.

6.3 New possibilities of transnational tourism

The Lao government has declared the implementation, development and promotion of cultural, natural and historical tourism as to encourage the growth in tourism and other service sectors. Laos has devoted more effort in developing infrastructures such as the construction of the roads to connect together the northern, central and southern parts. For many years, the Lao government has been attempting to extend more entry and local and international checkpoints in various parts in order to connect with many different countries. The development of tourist numbers in Laos is illustrated in Fig.24 by the tourist arrivals to Laos by Nationality. The number dramatically decreased in 2003 due to the worldwide effect of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Laos was also affected by this situation. The number of tourists started to climb up again in 2004 and 2005. Since 2006 visa exemption for seven member countries have been granted⁴⁶ (LNTA, 2006). This resulted in the number of visitors from ASEAN was significantly rising from 2006 and continued to grow.

⁴⁶ Except Indonesia and Myanmar.

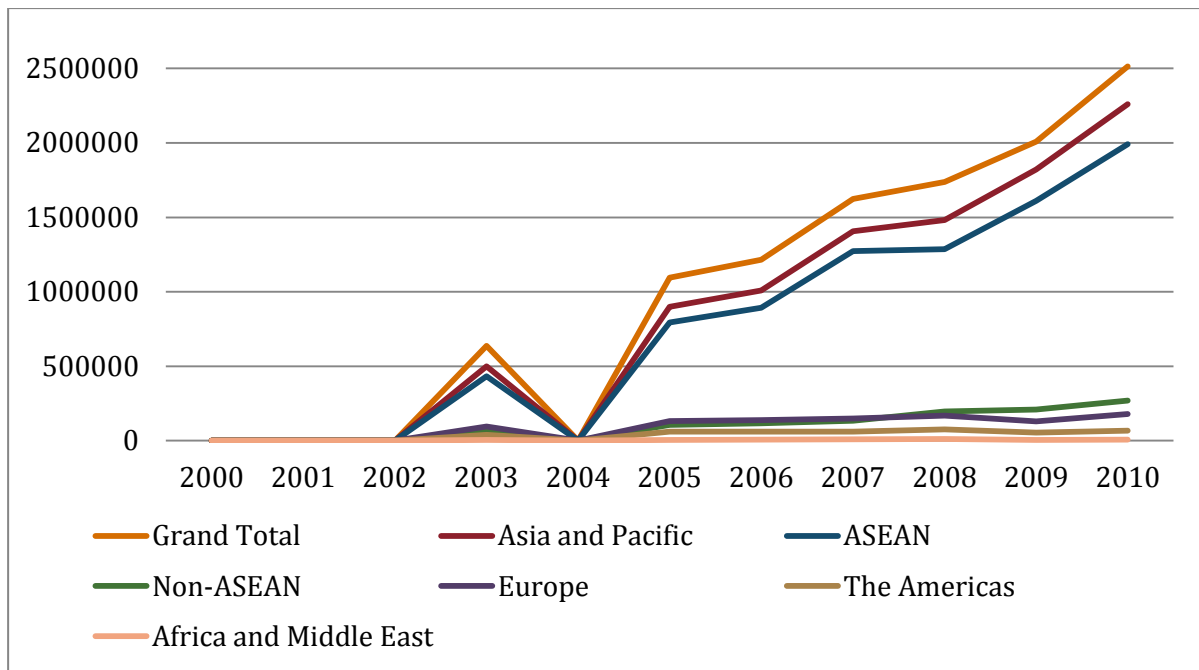


Fig. 24: Tourist Arrivals to Laos by Nationality in 2004 to 2010
(Source: own draft based on data from LNTA)

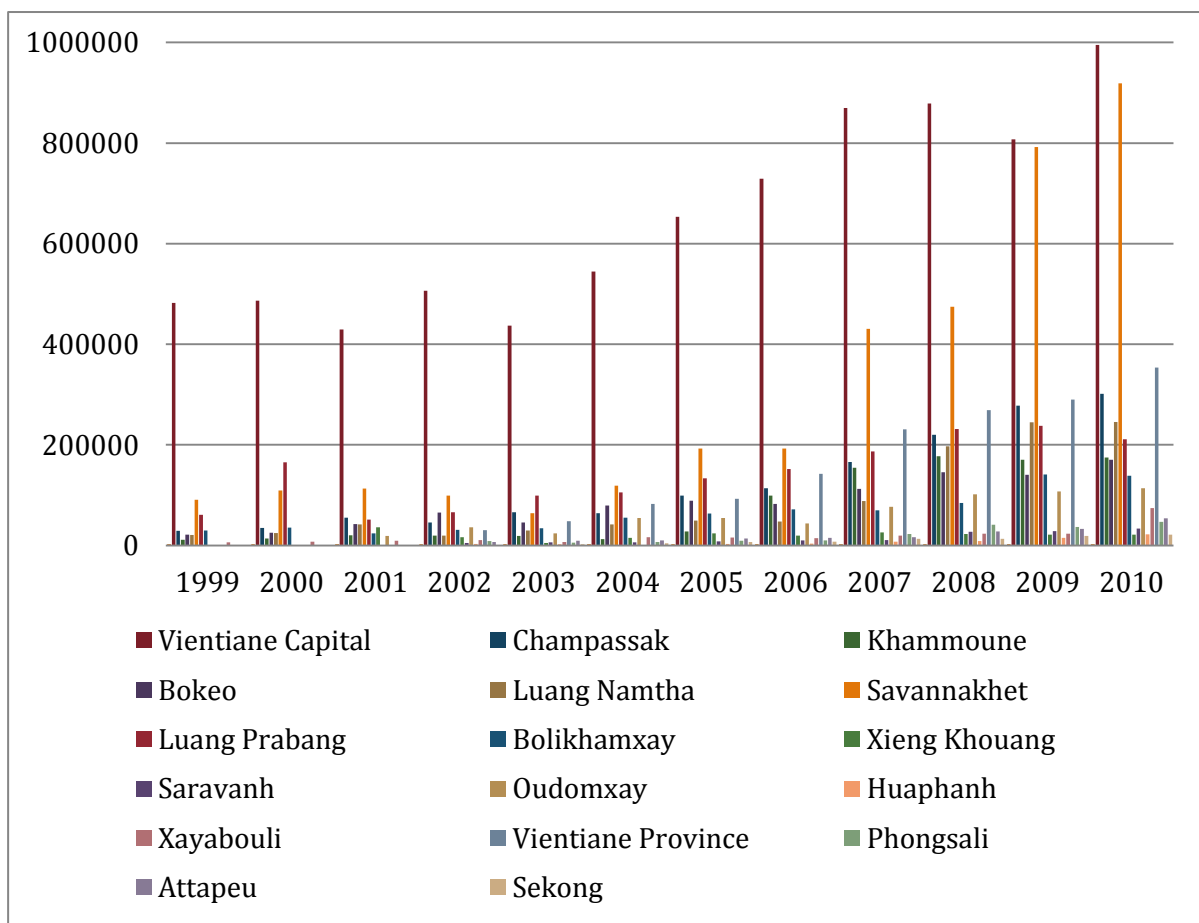


Fig. 25: Visitors by Province in 1999 to 2010 (Laos)
(Source: own draft based on data from LNTA)

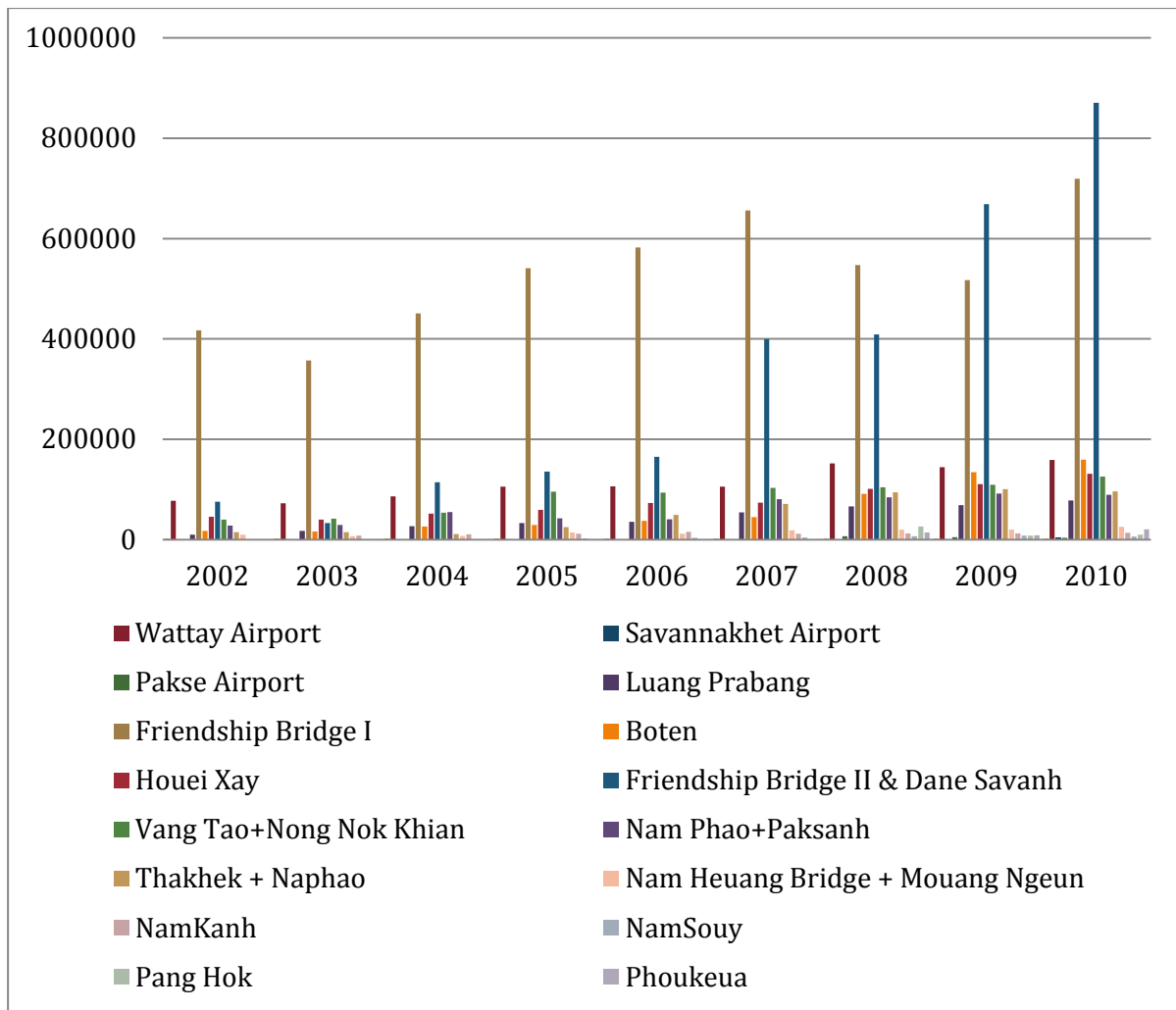


Fig. 26: Tourist Arrivals by Port of Entry in 2002 to 2010 (Laos)
(Source: own draft based on data from LNTA)

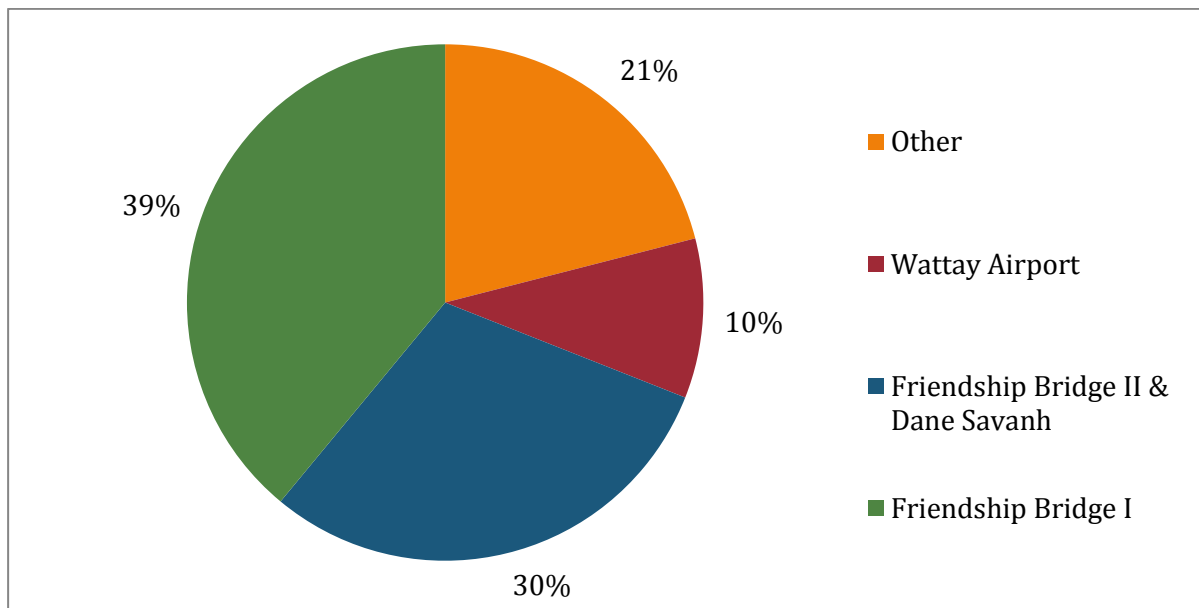


Fig. 27: Percentage of Tourist Arrivals in Laos in 2010
(Source: own draft based on data from LNTA)

Aviation facilities have been improved to promote tourism to Laos. In addition to these developments, the construction of Mekong bridges, the improvement and construction of roads accessed to tourism attractions, basic facility system such as electricity and water supply, and airport links to tourist cities of neighboring countries had also been developed. The connection of the road system consists of National Road no.13 which starts from Pak Mong in the north, passing through the main areas of Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Savannakhet and Pakse. This important road serves as a road between Phon Hong in the north and Seno in the south, and between Pakse and the Lao-Cambodia border at Veun Kham.

According to road developments in southern Laos, the road no.18B that connects Attapeu Province in Laos to Kon Tum province in Vietnam was completed. This road leads to the Phoukeua international border checkpoint, which is located in Attapeu province at the border of Laos and Vietnam. This makes convenient to pass Attapeu in Laos through Kontum in Vietnam, the border at Bo-Y is opened to foreigners to enter Vietnam. From Attapeu there are minibuses leave for the Vietnam border at Bo-Y. It is about 119 km from Attapeu to Bo-Y. The van continues on to the town of Ngoc Hoi which is about 18 km on the other side of the border. It takes about three hours in taking a route from Attapeu. There are further transportations available in Ngoc Hoi to other destinations. The nearest tourist destination is Kon Tum which located about 68 km to the east of the border town of Ngoc Hoi.

Traveling from Laos to visit Cambodia through Stung Treng, travelers start from Pakse province to the border by taking a bus, rental car or minibus, or other means of transport along the road no.13 going to the southern Laos. The Laos - Cambodian border at Veun Kham – Dong Kralor has been open for several years and transborder has been more simple in recent. For a long time the border between Cambodia and Laos could only be traveled by boat - from Veun Kham in Laos to Stung Treng in Cambodia. Recently as the road from Stung Treng improved, an alternate border crossing opened up, travelers are transferred by minibus. There was still a ferry crossing but when the bridge in Stung Treng was completed in 2007, they had no need to transfer by ferries any more. There were a few ways to cross the Laos- Cambodian border; there were some cheap, some convenient and some expensive choices. There were no public buses provided on this route.

It was expected the change after opening of the new bridge at Strung Treng. The road was in poor condition as a sand-mud during rainy season. Travelers might have hired a car, so-called taxi with Cambodian driver waiting for passengers at the border post. There were only one or two cars per day on service. There were also boat services available to cross the Mekong River. It took about two and a half hours with the longtail boat or only one hour with the speed boat when crossing the border from Veun Kham to Stung Treng by boat. In case of there were no vehicles during the day, travelers might have come early on the next day to arrange their transportation.

A few years ago if tourists were traveling to Cambodia, they would have needed a visa ready. Recently, if traveling from Laos to Cambodia, visas have been made available on arrival. Nevertheless, if they are coming to Laos from Cambodia, there is currently no visas are available at the border. It was confused as there were two Laos immigration checkpoints, one at Veun Kham and another at Dong Kralor. If they departed Laos at Veun Kham, they would have to go further about 4 km. to the Cambodian checkpoint at Dong Kralor. The Laos and Cambodian checkpoint at Dong Kralor are about 100m away. Even the border area was still undeveloped and consists of a couple of small wooden house.

After the improvement of highway, the border checkpoint might need to be moved from its current location. Nowadays, at the border between Laos and Cambodia, there is an international border crossing point at Trapeang Kriel in Stung Treng. The new border gate is located between the Trapeang Kriel (Trapaing Kreal) area in Stung Treng province of Cambodia and the Nong Nokkhen area in Champasack province of Laos. The transportation of travelers between both countries through this crossing point begin in 2009. The transport operation is yet in a testing phase that allows each country to operate five cars to travel on each section of the roads. Cambodia will have five cars with travelers on a road section of the Pakse in Champasack province of Laos to Stung Treng, five cars on the Pakse to Siem Reap road, five cars on the Pakse to Phnom Penh road, and five cars on the Phnom Penh to Vientiane road. That means Cambodia can have total 20 cars to transport travelers from Cambodia during the test phase. There is shared transport offered, where tourists can buy tickets at some guesthouses or tour operators in Laos or in Cambodia. In general they are transferred to the border on minibus with 15-20 seats capacity and then transferred to the Laos or Cambodian bus's contact at the border for continued travel. From Pakse and the Four Thousand Islands in Laos, it is

possible to arrive Phnom Penh in one day but at present not possible to arrive Siem Reap at the same length of time. This transportation is considered as probably the cheap and quick way but uncomfortable conditions on the bus and long distances travel are unavoidable. In the past, the road to Phnom Penh was closed and a trip that used to take about two days is now able to be done in approximately a third of time.

The survey of route connections for development of package tours that will combine tourism attractions of bordering countries utilizing possible air, land and water transport networks between Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The route from the borders starting from Ubonratchathani are distributed into many directions of neighboring country. At the moment there are some routes that have been designed and expected to stimulate economic growth and in this region. There, for example, has been such a plan as to enhance the Tourism Development Cooperation in the Emerald Triangle between Thailand-Laos-Cambodia as one destination to attract regional and international tourists. Another example, the Cambodia - Laos - Vietnam Development Triangle covers the region of the following provinces: Mondulkiri, Rattanakiri and Stung Treng (Cambodia); Attapeu, Saravan and Xe Kong (Laos); and Dak Lak, Dak Nong, Gia Lai and Kon Tum (Vietnam). These provinces are located in the border area of the three countries and share similarities in terms of natural, economic and social conditions. Compared to other development triangles, the provinces in this triangle almost share borderlines and border checkpoints have been established.

7 Case study I-san and Vientiane: Origin of tourists, interests and perceptions

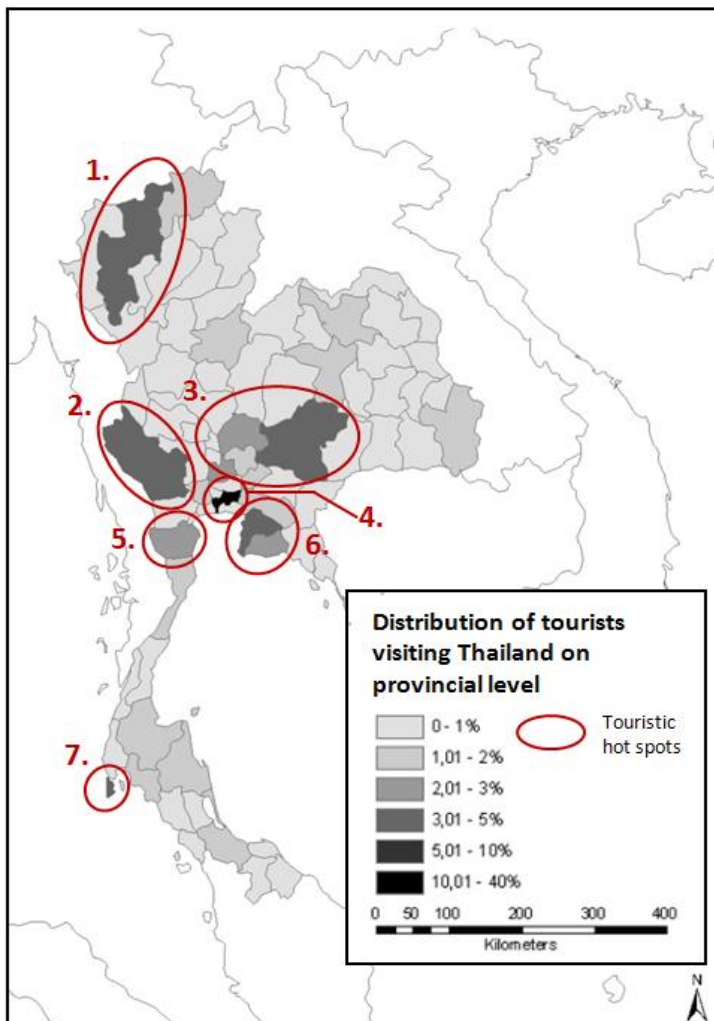


Fig. 28: Touristic hotspots in Thailand
(Cartography: Annika Mattissek; Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand 2007)

Previous chapters have shown that northeastern Thailand is a relatively remote part of the country that has been the target of tourism to a much smaller degree than other parts of the country (see chapter 2.5). This is also illustrated in Fig.28 which shows the numbers of tourists in different provinces within Thailand.

7.1 Visitors to northeastern Thailand

The main destinations of international tourism in Thailand are sand and sea in the south, ethnic hill tribes in the north and the capital life in Bangkok (see chapter 2.5.2). But what are the motifs, interests and expectations of tourists coming to I-san, coming

either to a big city like Khon Kaen or to the border city of Nong Khai? What do international tourists look for in the capital of Laos, Vientiane? The geographical imagination of northeastern Thailand in the eyes of tourists is that of a dull and remote area with a lack of major touristic highlights such as beaches or important cultural highlights. However, people who do visit northeastern Thailand often report being positively surprised and value the opportunity to get to know a part of Thailand that is not influenced by mass tourism. In quite a number of cases, visits to northeastern Thailand are motivated by a special kind of interest in culture – recent years have seen increasing numbers of (mainly male) tourists and long-time visitors who come northeastern Thailand to get to know Thai women or who have met a Thai partner in other parts of the country and are traveling with her to visit the family in I-san. This form of tourism is accompanied by an increasing number of Western men who migrate to the Northeast, often after retirement, to live here with their Thai partners and their families. But these are not the only persons who travel to I-san. Although absolute numbers are still relatively low, the opening of the borders has made it possible to combine a trip to the northeastern part of the country with visits to other destinations in Southeast-Asia. Recently trips *off the beaten track* are offered which combine destinations in Thailand and Laos by bus, car or train and invite the traveler to discover I-san. The visitors who make it to I-san on such a trip have the opportunity to discover that the region has a number of touristic highlights to offer that are usually overlooked by international tourists due to a lack of marketing and poor accessibility (see Fig. 28).

What is also striking about tourism in northeastern Thailand, in particular when comparing it with neighboring Laos, is that although both regions are culturally quite similar, Laos is perceived as far more attractive by many tourists. These observations were the starting point for a field course in spring 2006, “Tourism concept for northeastern Thailand”, which was conducted by researchers and students from the University of Heidelberg and the author. The target of the study was to explore possibilities for tourism in I-san and the perceptions and expectations of tourists who had already come to the region.

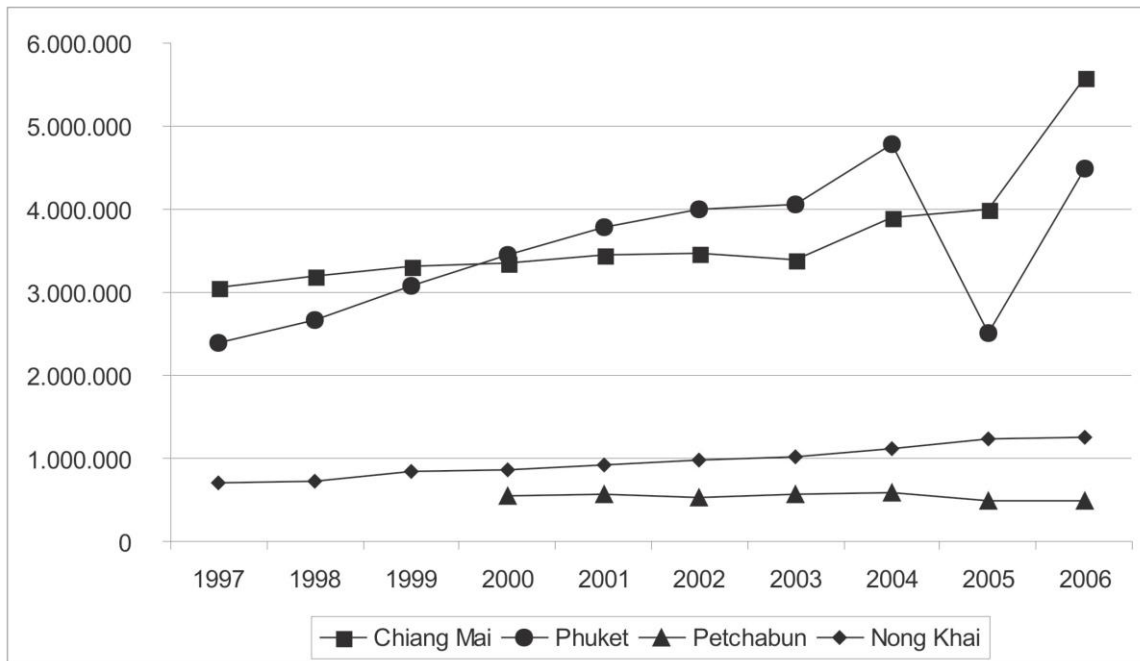


Fig. 29: Distribution of tourist stays between selected Thai provinces
(Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand 2007, Graphic: Annika Mattissek)

Against this background the study tried to analyze the current structure of visitors to the northeastern Thailand and to explore more about their backgrounds and perceptions of the region in order to investigate further possibilities for tourism in I-san. In the following, some major findings of this study are presented.

7.2 Demographic and social characteristics of visitors to I-san and Laos

International tourists who come to I-san are mostly young, well educated people from western industrialized countries. As Fig.30 shows, the persons within the sample mainly came from Western and Northern Europe and North America, with the largest groups in both countries being visitors from Germany and Britain. Although this is also in principle true for the Lao sample, some differences between visitors' origins become clear between the two groups: People from the U.S. are the third largest group in northeastern Thailand which can probably be explained by the former role of Thailand as a base for U.S. troops. French and Canadian tourists are represented to a smaller degree, ranking fifth and sixth respectively.

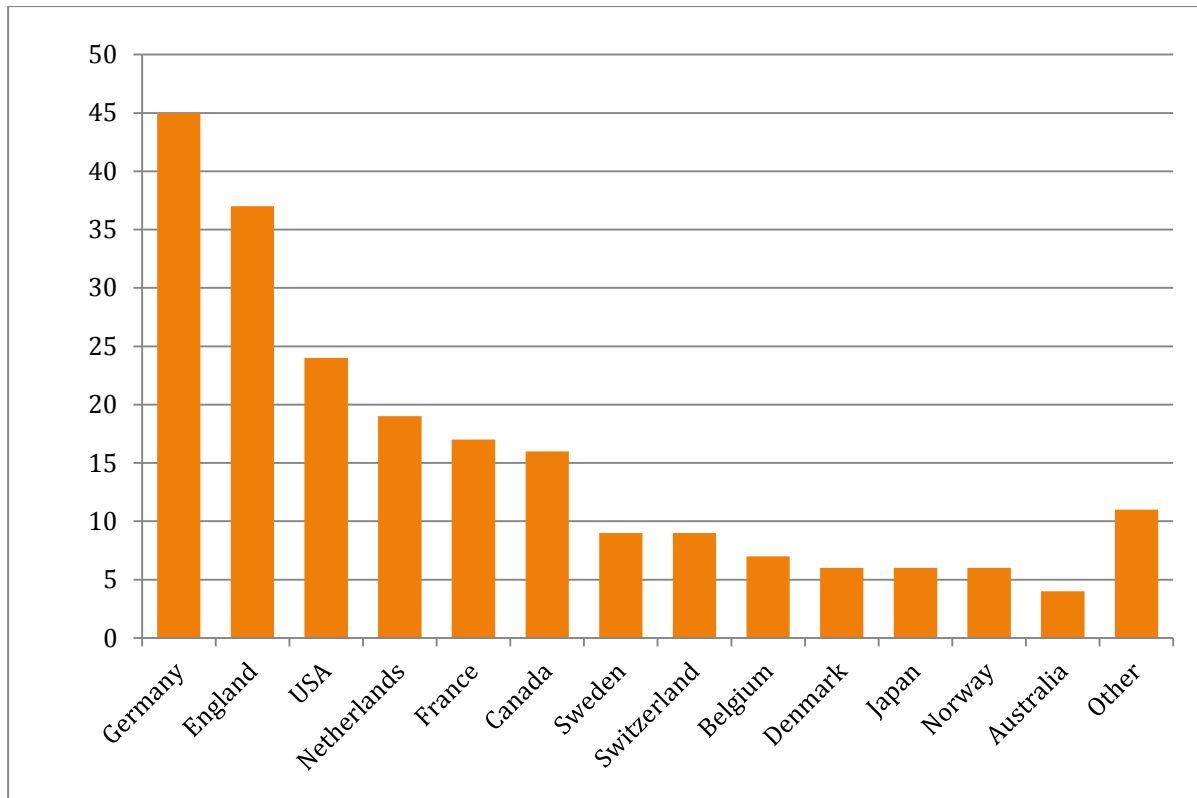


Fig. 30: Origin of international tourists in northeastern Thailand: Khon Kaen and Nong Khai

(Source: Survey by the Department of Geography⁴⁷, University of Heidelberg 2006, n=217)

The origins of visitors coming to Laos, on the other hand, mirrors the former status of the country as a French colony, which can be experienced in everyday life e.g. through the fact that a lot of (older) people within Laos still speak French and that the country has preserved a number of French traditions. It is thus not surprising that the number of visitors from French-speaking countries such as France and Canada are higher in Laos than they are in Thailand.

⁴⁷ Field course "Tourism concept for northeastern Thailand" 2006.

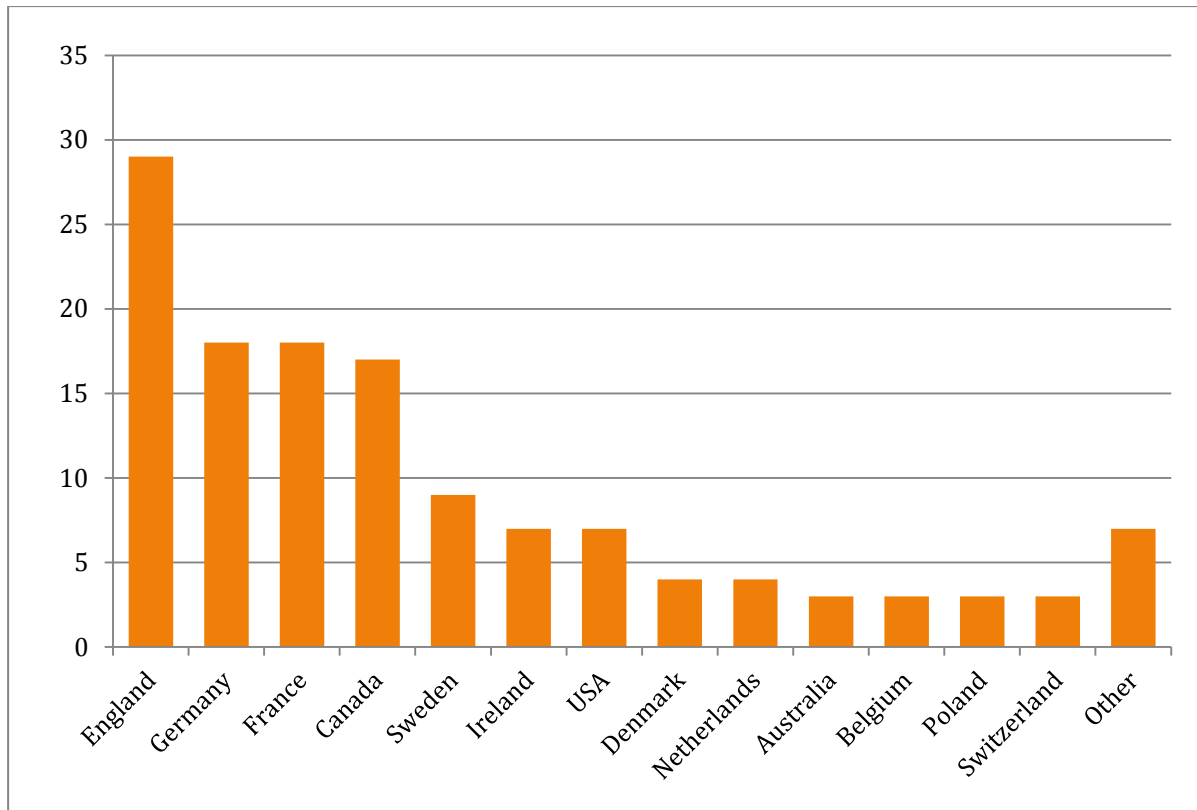


Fig. 31: Origin of international tourists in Laos: Vientiane
(Source: Survey by the Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg 2006, n=132)

Of the persons interviewed in the study, 87% had at least finished high school and approximately one third of the interviewees said that in terms of daily touristic activities, they were spending not more than 500 Baht (ca. 12 Euro) a day and a further 50% said they were spending between 500 and 1000 Baht. Taking these results together with the age structure of the sample (see Fig.32 below) it can thus be claimed that a majority of the persons interviewed can be described as “typical backpackers” who are traveling (often in search of authenticity and contact with the local population) with local transportation and are spending relatively little money during their trip.

However, taking age and gender characteristics together, it also becomes clear that there is another group of visitors coming to northeastern Thailand: In the age groups between 31 to over 60 years where it can be observed very clearly that the number of male tourists is much higher (in some categories more than double) compared to the number of female tourists (see Fig.32).

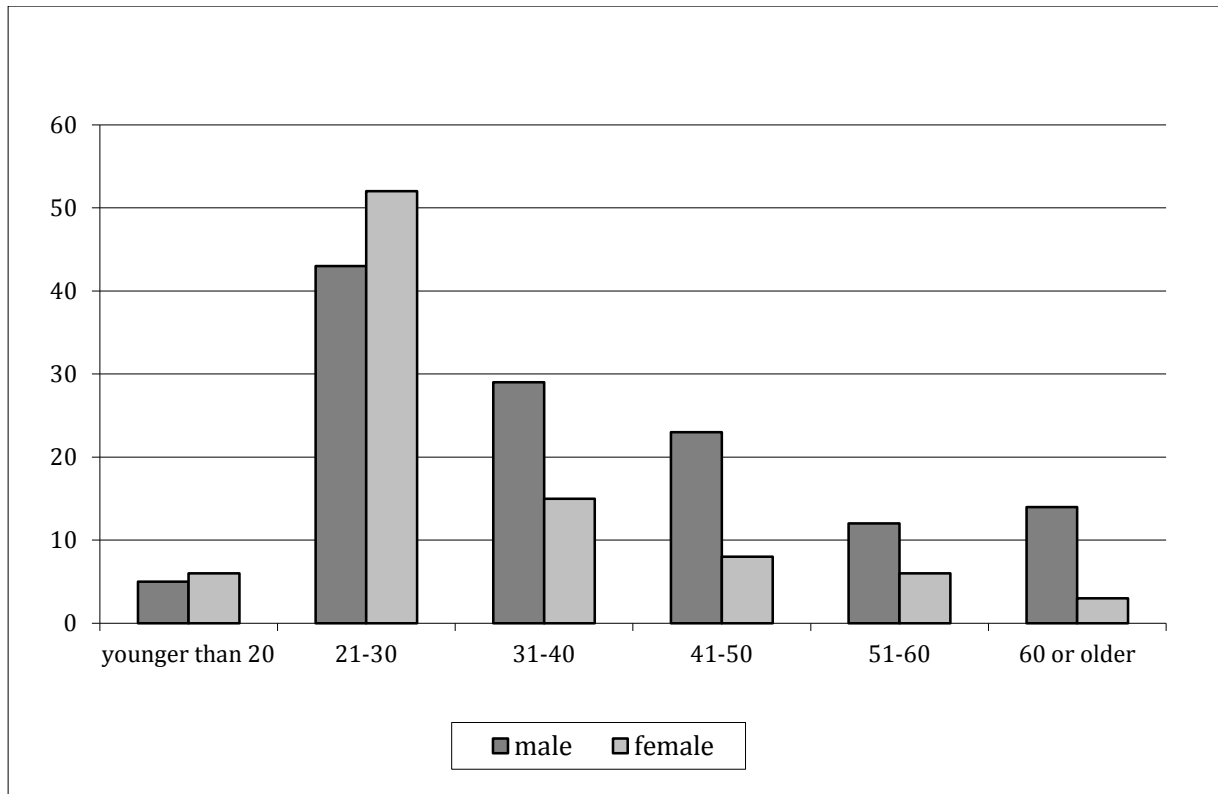


Fig. 32: Age and gender of persons interviewed in Khon Kaen and Nong Khai, Thailand (Source: Survey by the Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg 2006, n= 217)

It can be concluded from this observation and from the interviews about the motives of the tourists that a number of western tourists coming to northeastern Thailand are not coming because of cultural or natural attractions in the first place but in order to get to know Thai (I-san) women or in order to visit Thai women and their families. This corresponds with the subjective perception that both western sex tourism as well as the “wedding market” between Thai women and western men have massively increased in the last decade.

The main problem of tourism in northeastern Thailand is shown in Fig.33, which compares the length of stay in I-san with Laos. More than a fifth of tourists who come to northeastern Thailand are there for transit and short term stays. Lengths of stays of tourists in Laos, on the other hand, are much longer.

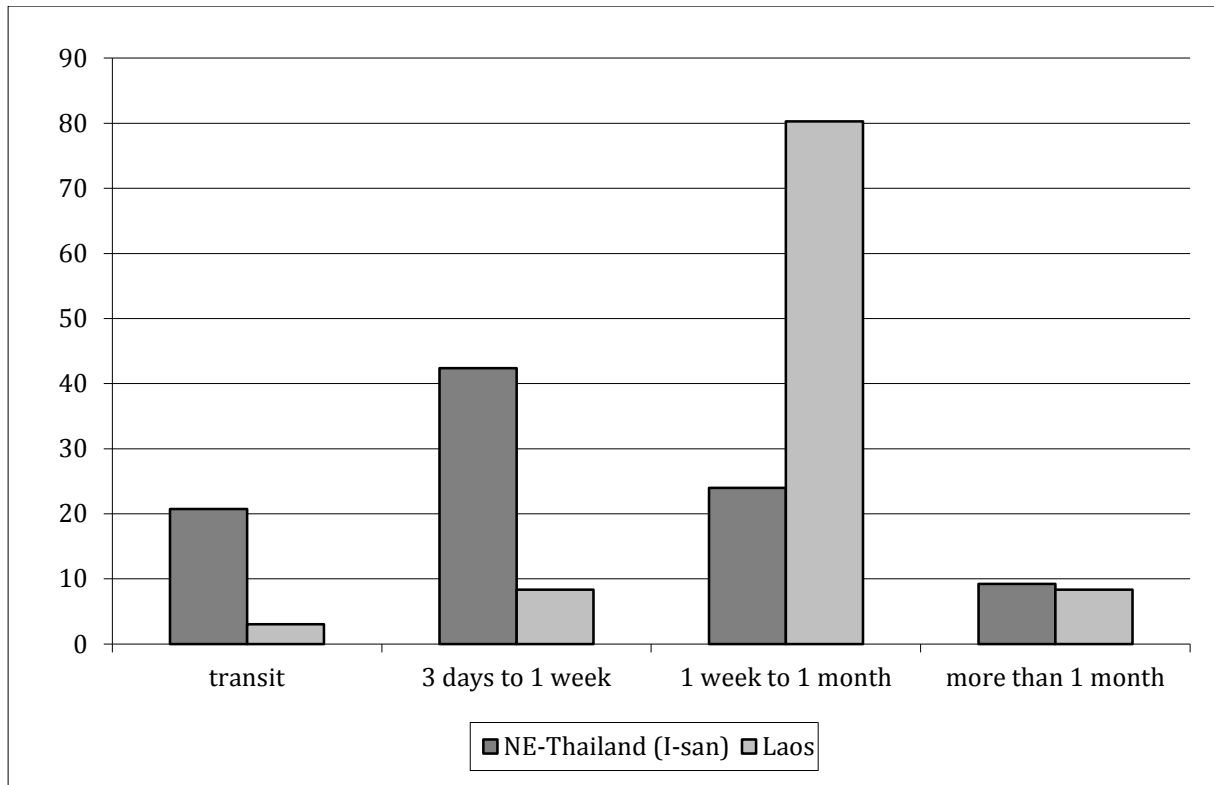


Fig. 33: Length of stay of tourists

(Source: Survey by the Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg 2006, n = 349)

7.3 Images and perception of northeastern Thailand

Against the background that northeastern Thailand and Laos share many similar cultural traditions and I-san-people often refer to themselves as being ethnic Lao, these strong differences in tourist preferences are not self-explanatory. Thus another topic addressed within the study was the question, what images and attributes visitors associate with northeastern Thailand and Laos. The results of this openly formulated question are depicted in Fig.34.

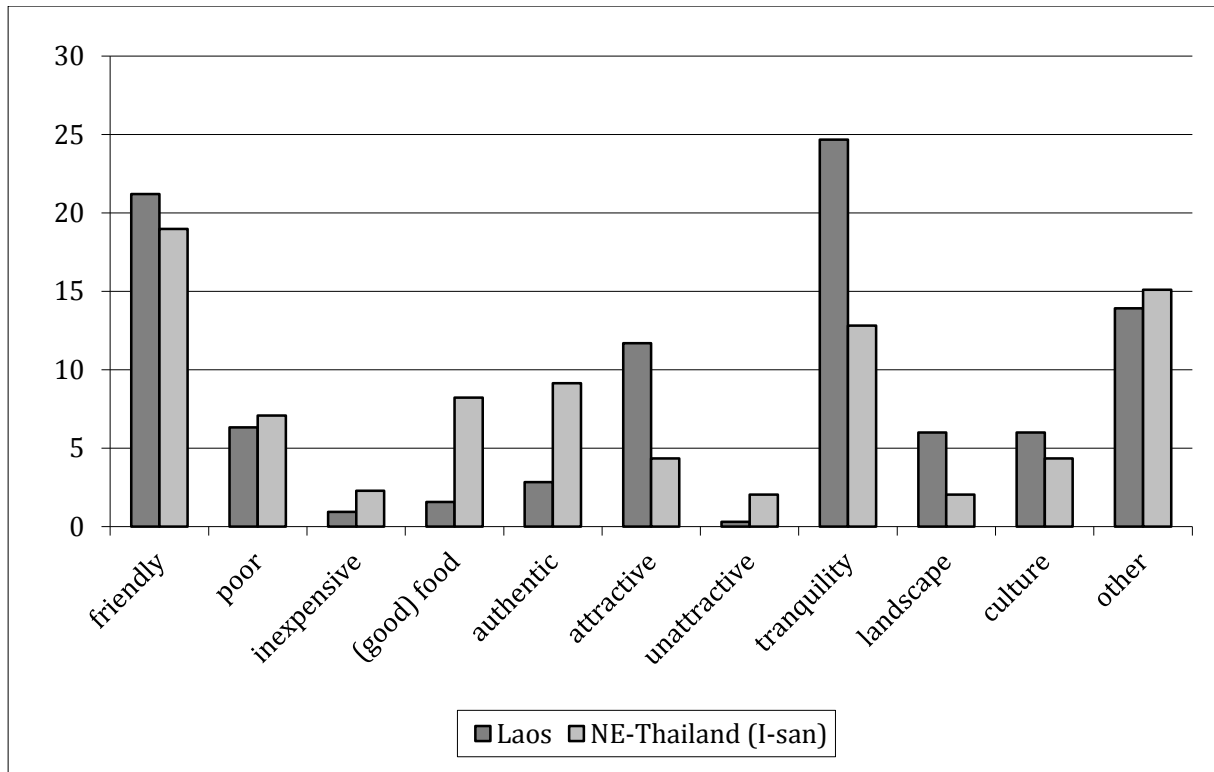


Fig. 34: Images and associations of tourists with I-san and Laos

(Source: Survey by the Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg 2006, n = 349, multiple answers were possible, numbers in percent of entries)

In both destinations, visitors pointed out the friendliness of the visited location as particularly striking. Apart from this, it becomes obvious that Laos is more often associated with positive attributes, such as being calm, having beautiful scenery, attractive culture and being generally attractive, which can be described as typical pull-factors for tourism. Associations with I-san Thailand, in comparison, tended to be less positive. Although I-san was associated with being “authentic” in a positive contrast to more touristic regions such as the south or north of the country) and having good food, the region was also perceived of as poor and sometimes even as altogether unattractive.

In conclusion it can be summarized that northeastern Thailand does not possess spectacular attractions for tourists but, since it is not, as yet, influenced so much by tourism yet and perceived of as very friendly and authentic, it still has the potential to become an attractive destination for visitors interested in getting to know sites “off the beaten track”. The main target group is individually traveling persons who are interested in getting to know the everyday life and everyday culture of the visited region. Another section of the study thus evaluated, what types of offers (activities, destinations etc.) could be used in order to make tourists stay longer in I-san. The following table shows

the acceptance of respondents to a number of ideas for tourism development that were formulated for the study.

Table 3: Interests of tourists in selected activities

(Source: Survey by the Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg 2006, n = 349, multiple answers were possible, numbers in percent of entries)

	Very interested	Interested	Less interested	Not interested
Visiting local villages	130 (59,9%)	62 (28,6%)	16 (7,4%)	4 (1,8%)
Visiting farms (rubber, melon, flowers)	63 (29,0%)	77 (35,5%)	51 (23,5%)	19 (8,8%)
Visiting archaeological sites (dinosaur parks, early human settlements)	65 (30,0%)	77 (35,5%)	52 (24,0%)	17 (7,8%)
Visiting geological, landscapes (caves, rock formations, waterfalls)	122 (56,2%)	64 (29,5%)	22 (10,1%)	2 (0,9%)
Visiting Buddhist Temples	81 (37,3%)	79 (36,4%)	37 (17,1%)	11 (5,1%)
Camping	27 (12,4%)	62 (28,6%)	60 (27,6%)	61 (28,1%)
Swimming in a natural spring/source	103 (47,5%)	53 (24,4%)	34 (15,7%)	22 (10,1%)
Mountain biking	42 (19,4 %)	54 (24,9%)	53 (24,0%)	62 (29,0%)

In general, the answers show a great openness of visitors towards different types of leisure activities. These included activities based on natural attractions (visits to geological highlights, swimming in a natural spring) as well as elements of both historic and everyday lifestyles (visits to archeological sites, Buddhist temples, receiving information regarding agriculture). By far largest the degrees of acceptance were reported for visiting local villages: More than 90% of respondents said they would be interested in such a visit. Both regional studies, I-san and southern Laos, share certain characteristics such as located “dead end street” and “off the beaten tracks” of tourism and had experienced

less growth of income from tourism than other regions: in Thailand mostly the coast and islands as well as Chiang Mai, in Laos mostly Luang Prabang and Vientiane. In the next chapter will represent the emerging tourism sector in Laos in view of tourist's demand and supply.

8 Tourism in southern Laos: the emerging tourism sector between the tourists' demand and possible supply

Throughout its history, communist Laos has been an isolated country. Thus the country has long been neglected by the booming tourism in Southeast Asia. This situation changed decisively after 1990 when tourism was discovered as an opportunity to foster economic development in the country after opening the borders, which is when Laos was chosen as a research site for this study. There the birth of a new tourism sector can be observed. The emergence of tourism in Laos took place between the demands of the tourists and the potentials of the Lao tourism sector to supply for touristic needs. The following chapter will present the emerging tourism sector with a special focus on Southern Laos and will explore the demand and supply of tourists and tourist entrepreneurs.

8.1 Tourism demand in southern Laos

To understand the development of tourism in Laos it is necessary to understand the tourists and their motives and demands for traveling. From the very beginning of tourism development in Laos, there was a large interest by many international tourists to visit the unknown and 'unspoiled' Laos. Especially backpackers felt disturbed by the masses of tourists visiting Thailand and were searching for alternatives. These backpackers were the pioneer tourists to Laos. As time went by, visa regulations as well as the organization of trips to Laos became increasingly. In addition, infrastructure and the standard of touristic accommodations were improved, which led to an influx of other tourist groups. But besides the Western tourists another group with clearly different expectations was on the rise. These were the Asian tourists, especially from economically growing countries such as Thailand, but also from China. Since both groups – Western tourists and Asian tourists show different consumption patterns and travel behavior, the question is, how these groups account for the constitution of specific parts of the tourism industry in Laos and how they differ from each other. In order to understand the tourism demand of these groups, a questionnaire was designed, which surveyed the different socio-demographic structures, travel behavior and expectations of Western and Asian tourists. In the following, the main findings of this survey are presented and since

Thai persons represent by far the largest group of Asian visitors, the study compares international (mostly western) with Thai tourists.

8.1.1 Characteristics of the empirical samples (socio-demographic data)

A first overview over the socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewed tourists shows that the tourists from Thailand on the one hand and the international tourists from mostly Western countries on the other hand are very different with respect to their personal data. These differences can be used to explain the different roles that tourism plays for Thai and international tourists, correlating with differences in the perception and evaluation of tourism destinations in Laos by the two groups.

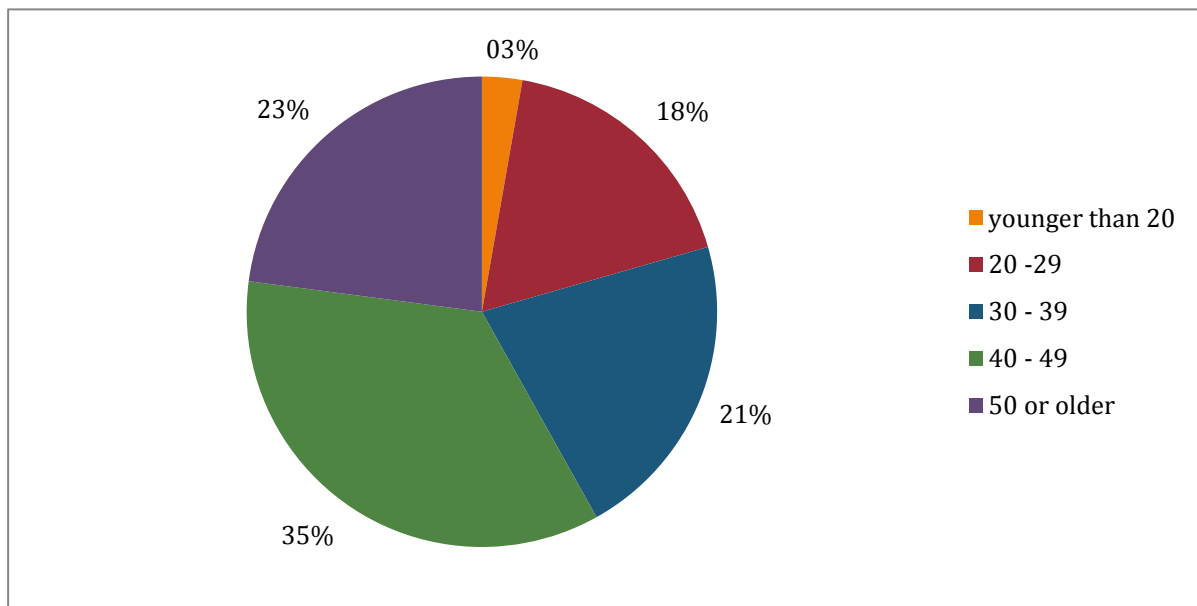


Fig. 35: Age groups of tourists coming from Thailand (Source: own investigation; n=253)

8.1.1.1 Thai tourists

The typical Thai tourist traveling to Laos is a middle aged person of relatively high status within Thai society. This is reflected by a number of indicators. The age structure is dominated by middle-aged people: 58.1% of the tourists are older than 40 and only 20.6% are younger than 29 years (see Fig.35). As will become clear in comparison to the international tourist's sample, the Thai tourists are significantly older. Accordingly it is also more likely that they have finished their education. The sample shows a clear correlation between age and professional status, showing the tendency that older people are more likely to be government servants or private business officers. Even taking into ac-

count that most of the Thai tourists will have already finished their education because of their higher age, their level of education is still strikingly high: 77.3% of the interviewees hold a graduate degree, of which 55.0% have bachelor degrees, 17.9% master degrees and 4.4% Ph.D.s. The remaining 22.7% interviewees have completed high school (see Fig.36).

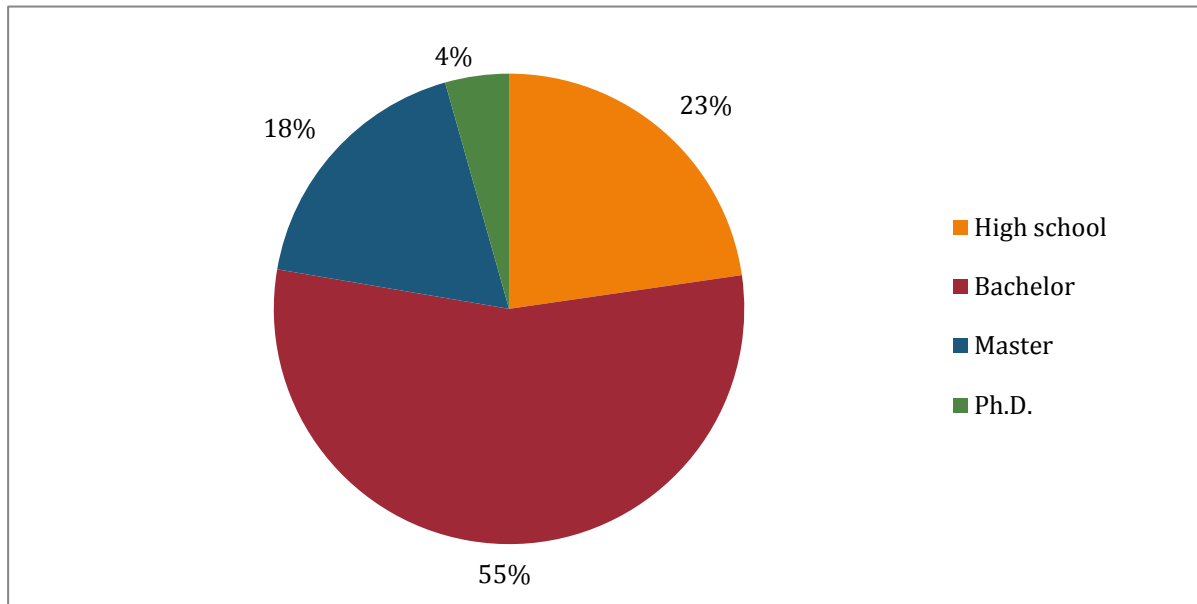


Fig. 36: The education level of tourists coming from Thailand (Source: own investigation; n=251)

How meaningful these values are becomes clear when they are compared to the national average of Thailand. Statistics from the Education Council (OEC)⁴⁸ state that in 2007 around 19 % of Thai inhabitants held a university degree. This shows clearly that the Thai tourists that were interviewed in Laos are not a representative sample of Thai society, but instead a very well educated group with high status. The latter shows also in the occupations held by the Thai tourists with 67,5% the vast majority work for the government (see Fig.37). These government positions are usually occupied by individuals with higher education, which shows in the sample in a highly significant correlation between education and occupation, indicating that people with higher education tend to more likely be government servants or private business officers. Although no more specific information was collected on occupations, it can be concluded from conversations with the Thai tourists during the interviews that a large number of the government officials are working in the education sector or as municipal officers in northeastern Thailand. Typical occupations included lecturers in the universities at the administra-

⁴⁸ Office of the Educational Council: <http://www.onec.go.th/> (accessed on 19.11.2013).

tion level, teachers at public high schools or mid-level civil service officers working in district offices.

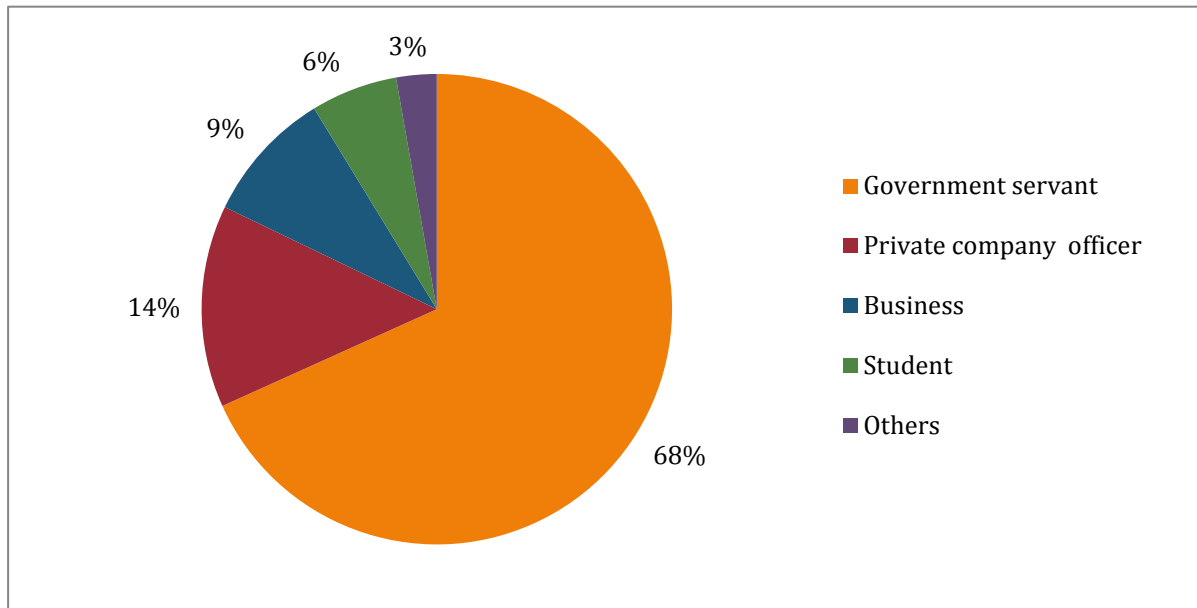


Fig. 37: The occupation of tourists coming from Thailand (Source: own investigation; n=252)

The second largest group of occupations was private company officers with 13.7%, followed by 9% of interviewees who owned their own business and 5.9% who were students. Especially when compared to the sample of international tourists, the percentage of students among the Thai tourists is remarkably low. This can be explained by the fact that students tend to prefer other destinations within Laos over the ones which were part of this study. Among students, the destinations of Vientiane and Luang Prabang are a lot more popular than the Southern and South-Western parts of Laos because many young people are attracted by the nightlife of the capital or Luang Prabang. The latter travel destinations also showed more travelers in total coming from the neighboring country of Thailand in general (LNTA, Planning and Cooperation Department Statistics Unit 2006).

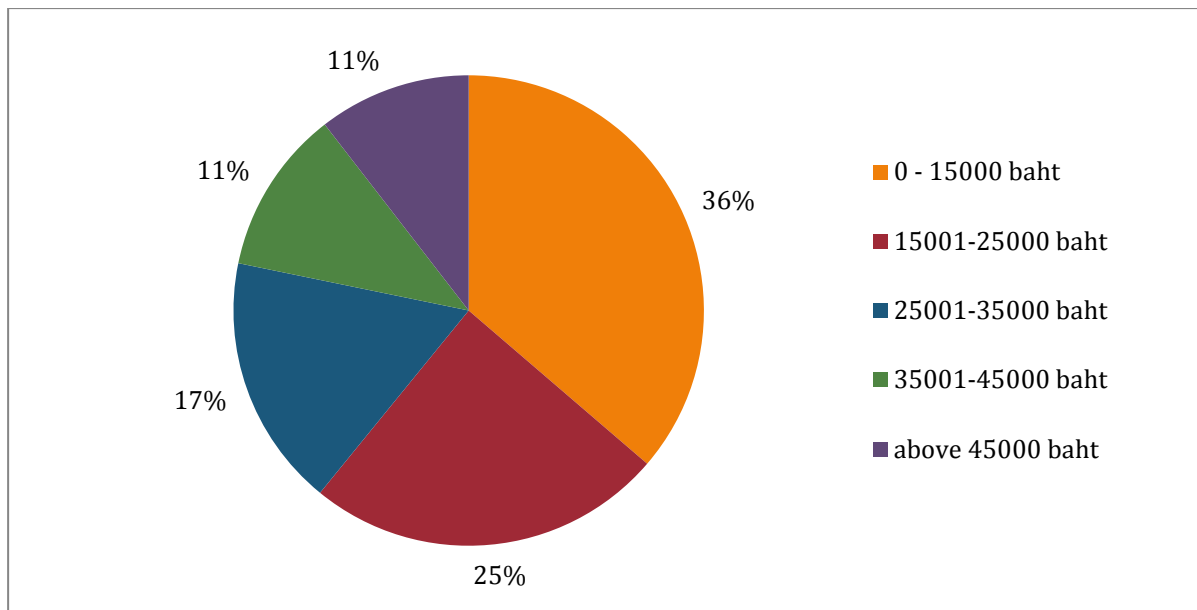


Fig. 38: Income level of tourists coming from Thailand (Source: own investigation; n=248)

The incomes of the interviewed Thai tourists also reflect the relatively high status of these people. The largest proportion of individuals stated that they had a monthly income of less than 15,000 Baht, 24.6% said that they earned between 15,000 and 25,000 Baht, 17.3% earned 25,000 to 35,000 Baht while 21.8% earned more than 35,000 Baht per month. Accordingly, 63.7% of the interviewees stated they had a monthly income of more than 15,000 Baht, which is a relatively high number compared to the northeastern Thailand average income⁴⁹ of 12,995 Baht per month in 2007⁵⁰. There was not a large difference between gender groups determined within the sample: of the interviewees, 53.6% were female and 46.4% were male.

With respect to tourist generating regions within Thailand, the majority of Thai tourists examined in the survey started their trip from northeastern Thailand (79%), followed by Central Thailand (18%). Only few Thai tourists entered the region of southern Laos from either Cambodia or other destinations within Laos (2%). Thus the most important tourist-generating region is Thailand and the Northeastern in particular. Among provinces of Thailand, most Thai tourists come from Ubonratchathani (with a 39.6% share), followed by 12.5% from Lopburi and 8.6% from Khon Kaen.

⁴⁹ The average income for all of Thailand in the year was 18,660 Baht per month and thus considerably higher than the income within the Northeastern region. This shows that the Northeastern part of Thailand is still the poorest region of the nation. Since the majority of the Thai tourists interviewed here came from the Northeastern region, the income data from there was used for comparison.

⁵⁰ Thailand National Statistical Office 2009: http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/house_seco/socio.htm (accessed on 19.11.2013).

Ubonratchathani is the province on the border connecting to southern Laos; it has the only checkpoint (named *Chong Mek*) from which one can travel to Pak Se in Champasack province. It is convenient for people from Ubonratchathani to cross the border and make a trip to southern Laos passing through Pak Se. Lopburi is a province in central Thailand, the high number of tourists coming from this province can be explained by the fact that there was a large group within an organized tour. The group consisted of civil employees who traveled to Laos over a 3-4 extended weekend. Likewise a group of civil employees from Khon Kaen (a province in upper I-san), also took part in a package tour for the extended weekend holiday. Yet the distance from Khon Kaen is quite far from the border when compared to Ubonratchathani. The distance from Khon Kaen to the border checkpoint is about 390 km. However the comparative distances seem to explain the pattern that most regional tourists (mainly Thai tourists) to Laos come from the bordering or nearby provinces. Only a few Thai tourists have come from central Thailand or the capital Bangkok. This may also be linked to the manner in which Thai tourists tend to travel. Thai tourists usually cannot afford the long-haul air-flights used by Western tourists and thus more commonly take advantage of organized bus tours mostly to Champasack province, and stay there for an extended weekend, for example during the Buddhist holiday.

8.1.1.2 International tourists

The vast majority of the international tourists traveling to Laos came from Europe or North America: 73.3% of the international tourists were Europeans, 12.4% US-Americans or Canadians. Among the Europeans, the British tourists form the strongest subgroup with 20.3% of the total number of international tourists, followed by the German tourists (15.5% of the total) and the French (11.6%). The typical international tourist is a young, well-educated backpacker, in many cases a university student or someone who has just finished high school and is spending some time abroad before starting university or taking a job. Others were traveling during a semester break. The majority of the international tourists were young adults, around two thirds (66.9%) were under 29 years old and only 16.3% were older than 40 (see Fig.39).

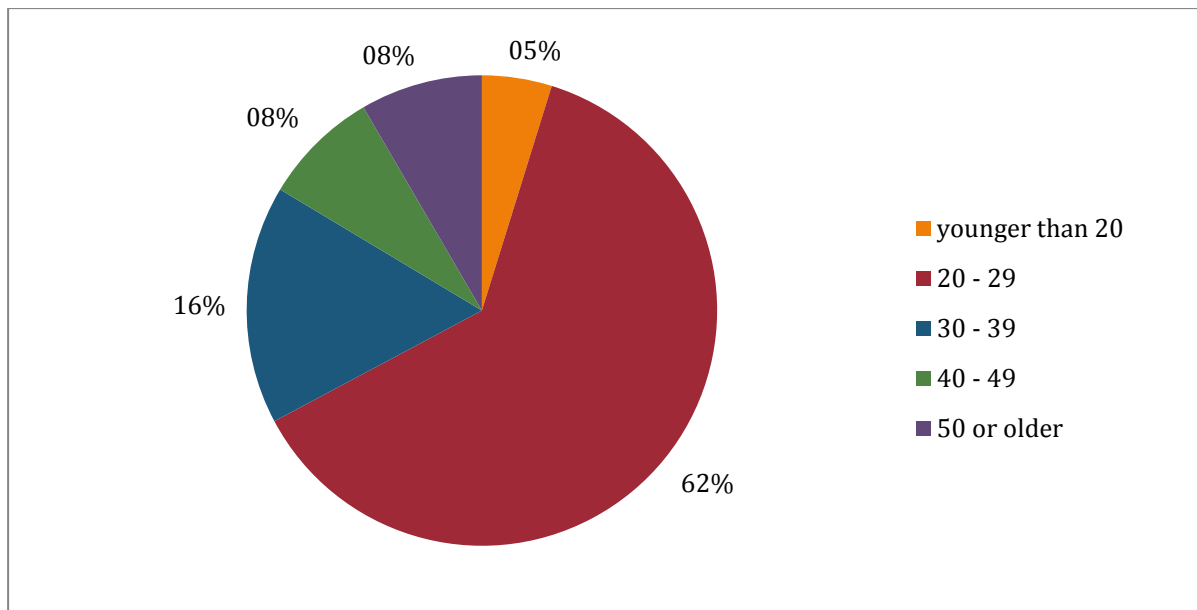


Fig. 39: Age of international tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=250)

The average level of education among the international tourists was quite high (see Fig.40)– more than half of them (54.2%) had graduated from university, approximately 45% of the international tourists did not hold a university degree (38.4% of this group held a high school diploma as their highest level of education, 2.0% had finished an apprenticeship and 5.3% had other forms of education). Although the proportion of interviewees with a university degree is relatively high compared with the German average (14.3% of Germans older than 15 hold a University degree)⁵¹, it is still lower than the percentage of university graduates within the Thai sample. This can be explained by the lower age level and the fact that 28.1% of the international tourists were still students at university.

⁵¹ Statistisches Bundesamt (2008): <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Content/Publikationen/Querschnittsveroeffentlichungen/Datenreport/Downloads/Datenreport2008,property=file.pdf> (accessed on 19.11.2013).

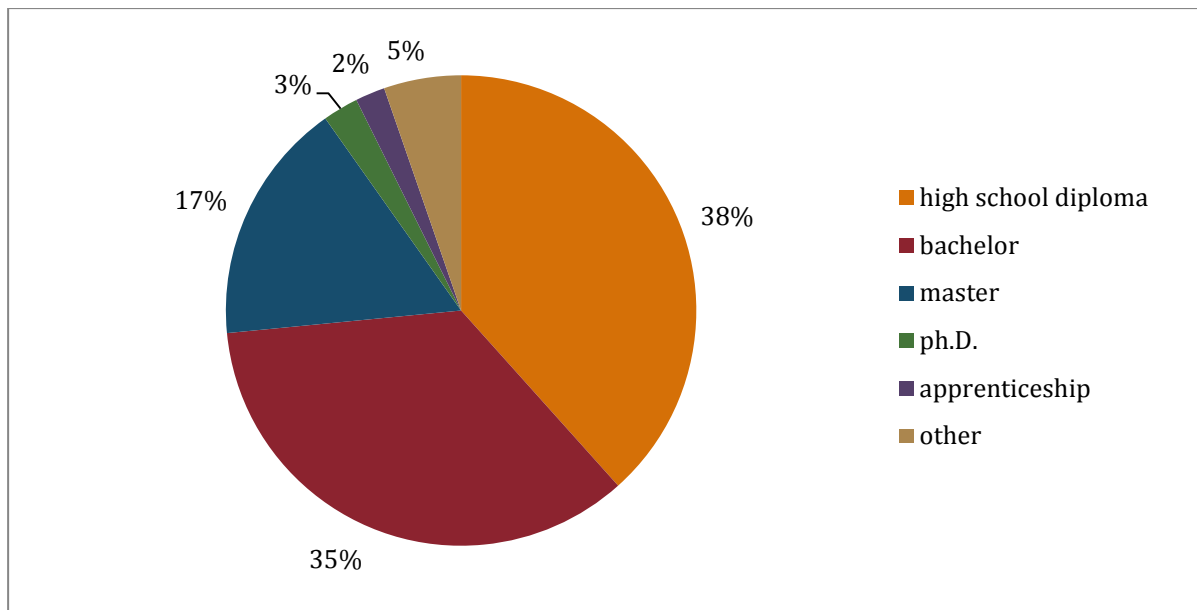


Fig. 40: Level of education of international tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=245)

Even if it is assumed that all the people who were students would eventually graduate from university and hold a degree in the future, 73.9% of persons will perspective hold a university degree. However this is still a lower percentage than within the Thai sample, where this group accounted for 83.3% of the interviewees. Students also made up the second largest group within the different occupations of the interviewees (see Fig.41). They were only outnumbered by employees with 34.9% of the sample followed by 7.7% who owned their own business, 3.4% who were retired and 26% indicated as "other". One possible explanation for the high percentage of persons who chose the category "other" is that it is quite common in western countries to undertake longer trips to foreign countries after graduating from high school. Thus, some respondents may not have already enrolled in university or may have just finished their mandatory civil service (military service or the alternative non-military service) or were taking a gap year doing service in the social or environmental sector.

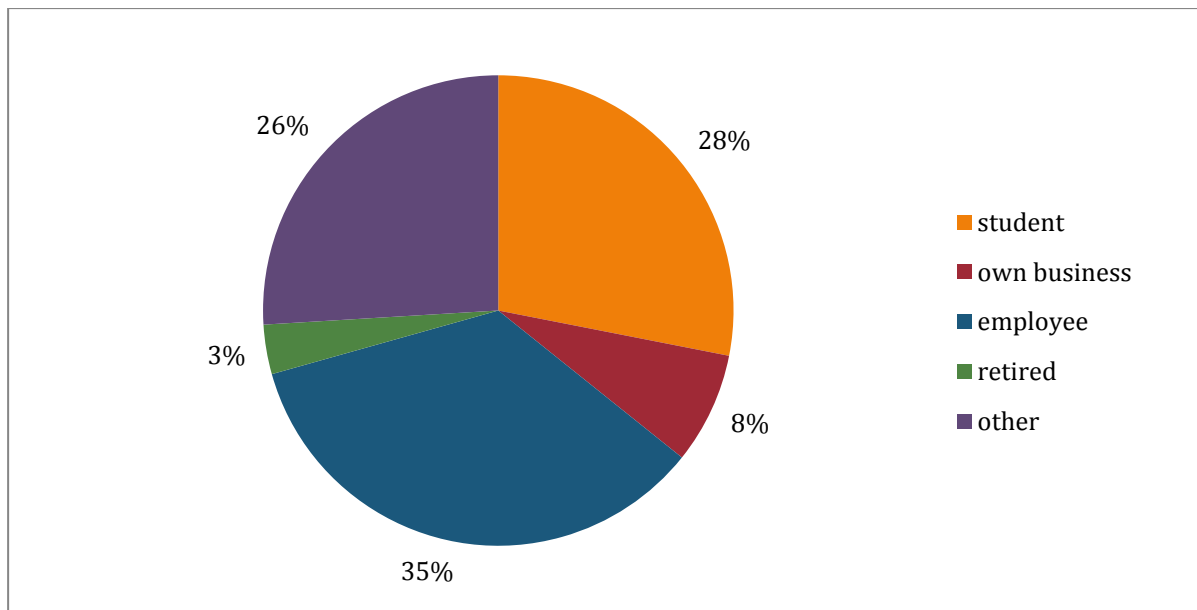


Fig. 41: Occupation of international tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=235)

Converted into U.S. dollars⁵², the proportion of people within the different income groups of the sample were relatively evenly distributed (see Fig.42): 27.6% responded as having a monthly income of less than 1,000 USD; 23.4% earned between 1,000 and 2,000 USD; 25.5% earned between 2,000 and 3,500 USD; and 23.4% of interviewees stated they had monthly incomes greater than 3,500 USD. These incomes need to be seen in relation to the average incomes in the home countries of the international tourists. The British provided the largest group of international tourists (20.3%), followed by Germans (15.5%). The average monthly income of employees in the UK was €1,980 in 2005 (ca. 2,800 USD), German employees earned €2,250⁵³ (ca. 3,200 USD) on average in 2006.⁵⁴

⁵² Bank of Thailand: Foreign Exchange rates as of 30 April 2008, Weighted-average Interbank Exchange rate 31.742 Baht/ US Dollar:
http://www.bot.or.th/English/Statistics/FinancialMarkets/ExchangeRate/_layouts/application/exchange_rate/exchangerate.aspx (accessed on 19.11.2013).

⁵³http://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/nn_53848/sid_9148088D059252887D0C3D148087FC5F/DE/Wirtschaft_und_Verwaltung/Steuern/Aktuell/005a,property=publicationFile.pdf (accessed on 19.11.2013).

⁵⁴ http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/income_distribution/table3-2-2004-05.pdf (accessed on 19.11.2013).

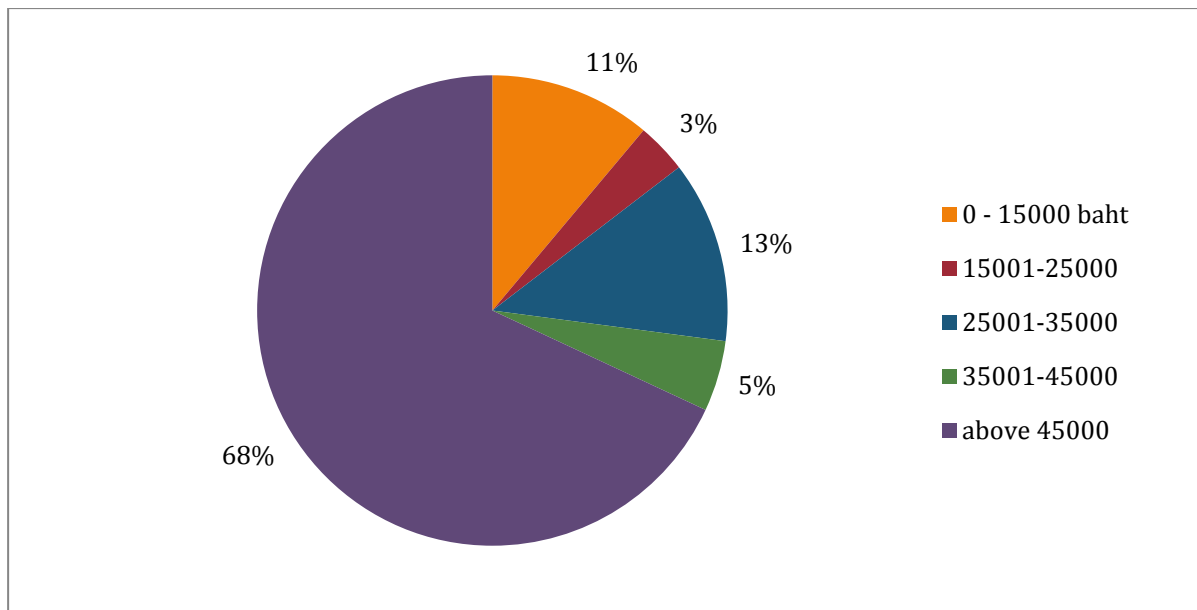


Fig. 42: Income level of international tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=144)

Compared to the Thai sample, it is striking that the monthly incomes of the interviewed international tourists tended to be lower than their country averages (although it is impossible to calculate an exact average income from the data). This can be explained by the high proportion of people who were still enrolled at university or in between high school and university and thus had little or no incomes of their own and would, accordingly, in most cases be “low budget travelers”, i.e. choosing countries which are relatively cheap for them to travel in and they will also tend to choose inexpensive means of transportation and accommodation. Due to the different categories used in the questionnaires and the varying average living costs in the different countries, it is not possible, to directly compare the incomes of the Thai and international tourists. Still it has to be stated that in general, Laos is a cheap country to travel to for Western tourists, since the average cost of living there is a lot lower than in countries like Great Britain, Germany or the United States. Within the sample of international tourists, the gender proportions are slightly different from the Thai sample: 56.4% of international tourists traveling to Laos were male, 43.6% were female.

With respect to tourist generating regions within Laos, aside from the Thais, countries in Europe and North America have been important tourist generating regions for Laos and Southeast Asia in general. More than 73% of the international tourists are Europeans, 12.4% US-Americans or Canadians. Among the Europeans, the British tourists form the

strongest subgroup with 20.3% of the total number of international tourists, followed by the German tourists (15.5% of total) and the French (11.6%).

The dominance of the British and the Germans among the European⁵⁵ tourists can be explained through the fact, that in these countries traveling is very popular. Especially in the last decades and with the new possibilities of access in a globalized world (e.g. no-frills airlines) long-haul travels have become very common. While the British often stated that new cultures and the friendliness of the people attracted them to visit Laos, for the Germans (who in general travel a lot), historical destinations as well as a desire to learn about the way of life of a local people with an interesting culture and a wide variety of tourist sites were given as the most important reasons to travel to Laos. But also a considerable number of French visitors were met at the research site. For the French, Laos is a former colony which is of particular historical interest. The presence of tourists coming from North America can be explained similarly to Thailand with the historical background of the Vietnam War (R & R Program) and the fact that Thailand and there-with the region of Southeast Asia was (and is) known for holiday-making and recreation. For international tourists, economic factors played a major role in the decision to come to Southeast Asia. Even though the flight is costly, the general travel costs to arrive at the destination are low. In the following, the economic factors of tourism to Laos are discussed.

8.1.1.3 Interim conclusion

From the comparison of the Thai and international travelers' samples it can be concluded that these show significant differences. The Thai tourists, on the one hand, tended to be middle-aged, well-established, extremely well educated and hold positions of high status within their society. The international tourists, on the other hand, were generally a lot younger and often still in the middle of their education. Accordingly their monthly income was relatively low compared with their home country averages. Also the social status or position of the international tourists was (not yet) as high as the status of the Thai visitors. These findings point to the different cultural status and background that a trip to Laos has for the two different groups of visitors: While for the Thai tourists traveling to Laos is often a matter of status and reward within their workplace, international

⁵⁵ For more details see also the Tourism Authority of Thailand 2008-2012: Final Report of Attitude and Behavior of European Tourists.

tourists tend to travel to Southeast Asia as an '*adventure*' while they are still young and unaffiliated. The differences in travel behavior, perceptions and ratings of the travel destination that result from these different backgrounds are analyzed below.

8.1.2 Traveling patterns and motives

8.1.2.1 Travel behavior of international and Thai tourists in comparison

Having depicted the differences between the socio-demographic characteristics of Thai and international tourists visiting Laos in the preceding chapter, the following chapter will analyze the different forms of travel behavior of the two groups. Usually a journey begins far earlier than the beginning of the voyage with the preparation of the trip and the collection of information about the destination. Often such information is essential for decisions about where to travel. Information about the conditions and opportunities of traveling and touristic offers are thus central to the behavior of tourists. Accordingly, interviewees were asked in the survey from which sources they gleaned information about their travel destinations. The sources of information that Thai and international tourists used for this purpose differed significantly: For Thai tourists, the most important source of information was friends and relatives (62.5%). In contrast, although this category also played an important role among international travelers, only 49.8% named it as a source (see Fig.43).

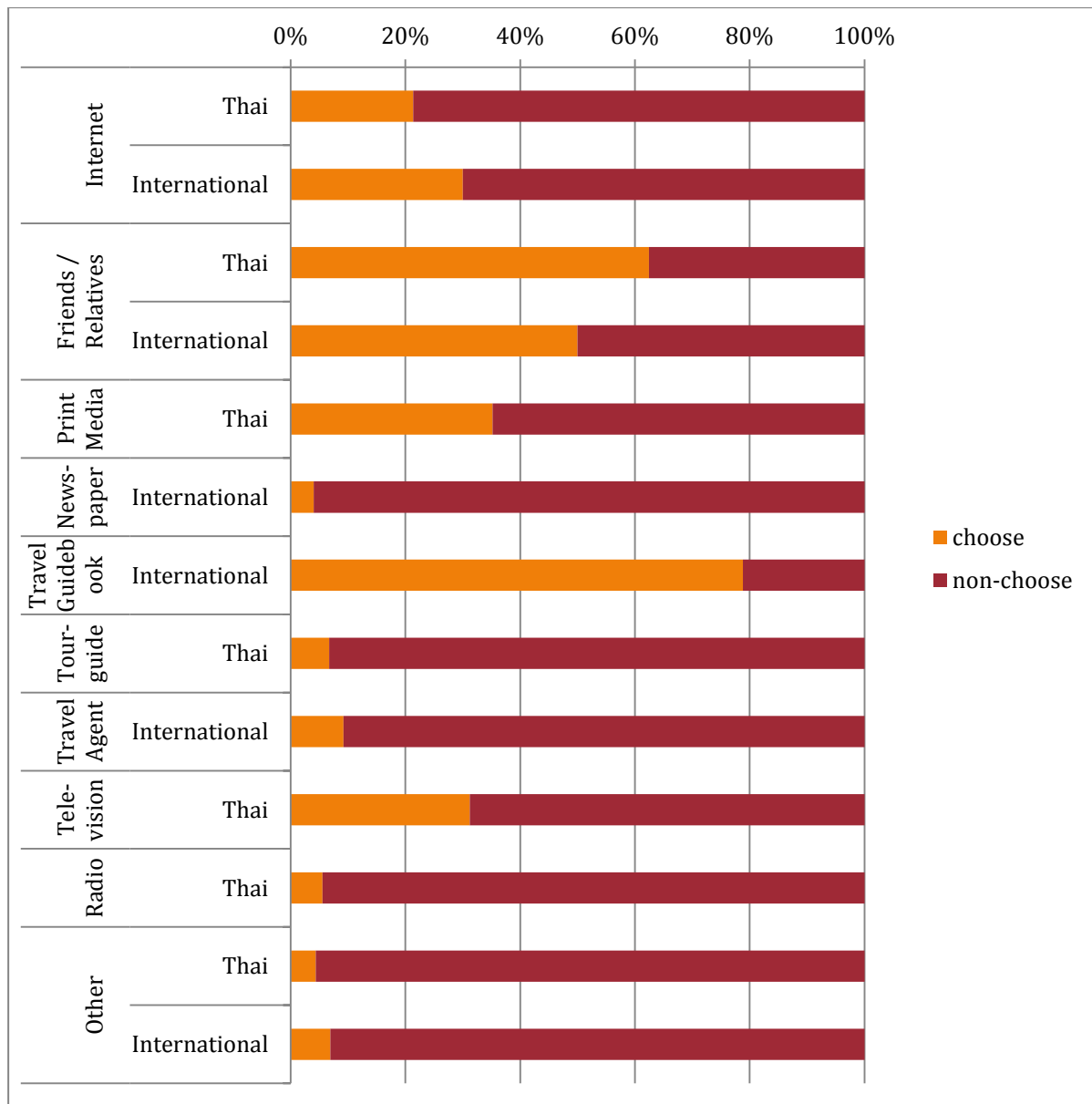


Fig. 43: Sources of information about the travel destination (Source: own investigation; Thai n=253, International=251)

This can be explained by the close distance between Thailand and Laos. Since Laos is neither very distant nor hard to reach for Thais, probably a lot more people travel to Laos from Thailand than from European, American or other Asian countries (e.g. Japan, Korea etc.). Accordingly, conversations about trips to Laos might be a lot more frequent among Thais than among visitors from the other countries. Another explanation about why conversations with friends play such an important role can be the personal context of that information. Through this source of information not only facts about means of transportation, destinations and prices can be exchanged but also moods and feelings about the people and the landscapes as well as personal highlights. However, verbal in-

formation is not the only means of getting to know something about the travel destination Laos.

Other sources that were relevant in particular to Thai tourists were print media (35.2%) and television (31.2%) – categories which were not important for most of the international tourists (only 4.0% of the international tourists chose newspapers as a relevant source of information). Given that media coverage concerning Laos differs greatly between neighboring Thailand and 'far away' countries; this is not surprising since many Western tourists will not have had many opportunities to have watched any programs on Laos in their home countries. If Western tourists used mass media for information on their Laos trip, it was usually the internet, which was named by 30.0% of the tourists as a source of information, while it only played a role for 21.3% of the Thai tourists.

By far the most important source of information for international tourists was their guidebooks: 78.5% of the interviewees named these as important for obtaining information on their travel destination. This result is typical for international tourists traveling as backpackers – they usually follow the recommendation of well-established guidebooks like the *Lonely Planet* or the *Guide du Routard* and, in many cases, entirely plan their trip on the basis of the information in these books. Another category that was not explicitly asked for in the questionnaires but might also be relevant for international (backpacker) tourists was the views of other people, especially other backpackers they met during their journey. Of the 14 respondents who specified the category "other", 9 named other travelers as a relevant source of information for their planning.

This is also typical of the individual traveling style that Western tourists in particular often employ; many of these travelers do not entirely plan their trip in advance, let alone book accommodation in advance, but instead adjust their travel route *on the run*, reacting flexibly to information on places of interest that they were not aware of before and adjusting their destinations depending upon the contacts they make with other tourists and the recommendations they obtain from them. In contrast, such behavior would be rather unusual for Thai tourists who generally travel within a group of people in an organized tour and accordingly are less likely to make new acquaintances or change their pre-booked route during the trip.

To summarize, multiple sources of information reflect to some extent the behavior of the different tourist groups in Laos. As will become clear later on, Thai tourists usually join

organized travel tours and consider their journey to Laos as a reward and matter of social status. Thus it is important what friends and relatives can report from their previous travels to Laos. Also the importance of television and print media fits into this observation. Meanwhile, international tourists are usually young backpackers who need sources of information which allow them to flexibly plan their journey.

8.1.2.2 Reasons and motives for traveling in Laos

To understand the different types of tourism-markets currently evolving in Laos as well as the differences between sub-markets, it is essential to know about the reasons for traveling of the customer groups. Due to this reason the questionnaire tackled this issue with major tourist groups, the Thai tourists and the international tourists.

In order to determine the motivation for tourists to travel to Laos, the interviewees were asked to choose the reasons for traveling most relevant to them from a set of categories. Since these categories were similar but not equal between the two questionnaires, the results are analyzed separately in a first step and then compared to each other. The following figure gives an overview on the reasons of tourists from Thailand for their journey to Laos.

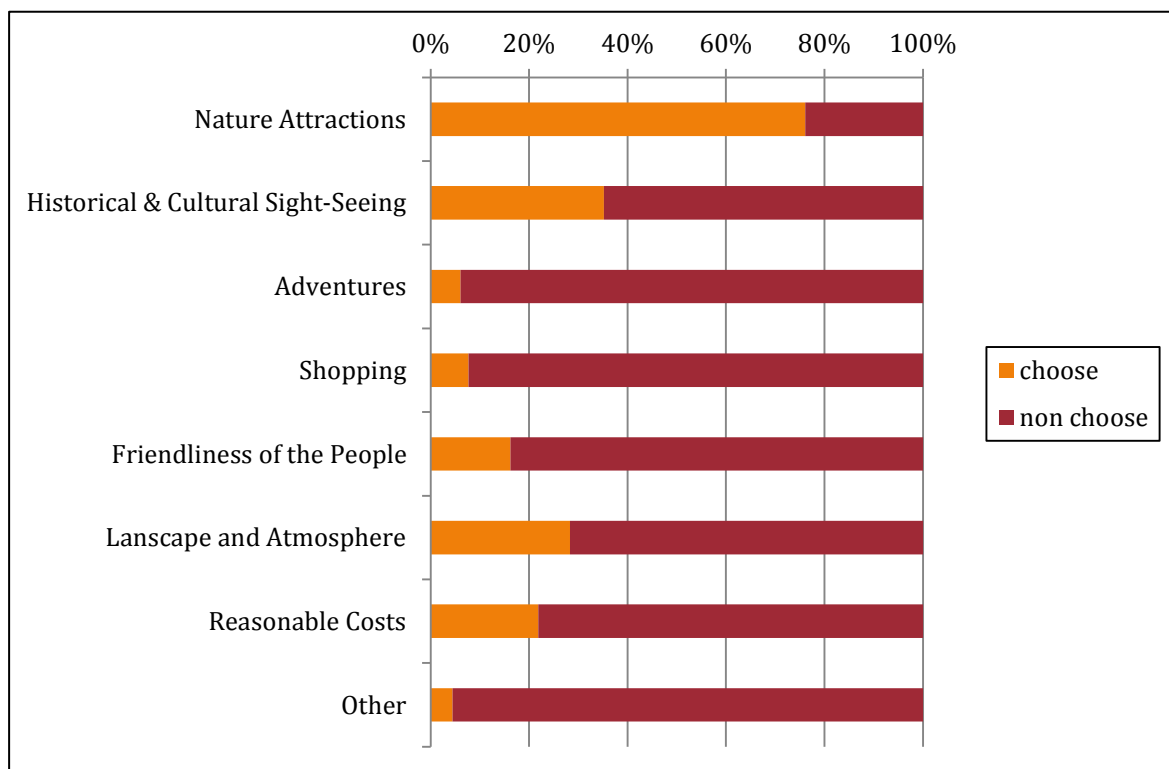


Fig. 44: Reasons of Thai tourists to travel to Laos (Source: own investigation; n=247)

By far the most important reason for *Thai tourists* to travel to Laos was nature attractions, which 76.1% of the interviewees named as their motive to visit the country. The next most important reasons named were historical and cultural sightseeing (35.2%) while landscape and atmosphere rated at 28.3%. The great significance of natural attractions for the Thai tourists as a motivation to visit Laos was also reflected in the satisfaction level with different attractions, which showed the greatest appreciation for natural highlights such as waterfalls (see Fig.44). Less importance was attributed by the Thai tourists to the reasonable costs of traveling in Laos, which was chosen by 21.9% of the interviewees. It is important to note here that although Laos might be considered an inexpensive country for Western travelers, this is not necessarily the case for people from Thailand. As becomes clear in the following chapters (see chapter 8.1.4), price levels within Laos were rated a lot more critically by Thai travelers than by the international tourists. Clearly, when compared with other tourists by country, the fact remains that only 16.2% of the Thai tourists interviewed stated that the friendliness of the Laotians was a reason for them to travel to the country. Also negligible were the percentages of respondents who named shopping (7.7%) and adventure (6.1%) as reasons for their journey. Also, the open category of "other reasons" was only picked by 4.5% of the Thai interviewees. For international tourists, on the other hand, reasons for traveling to Laos differ significantly from those of Thai tourists as is shown in the following figure (Fig.45).

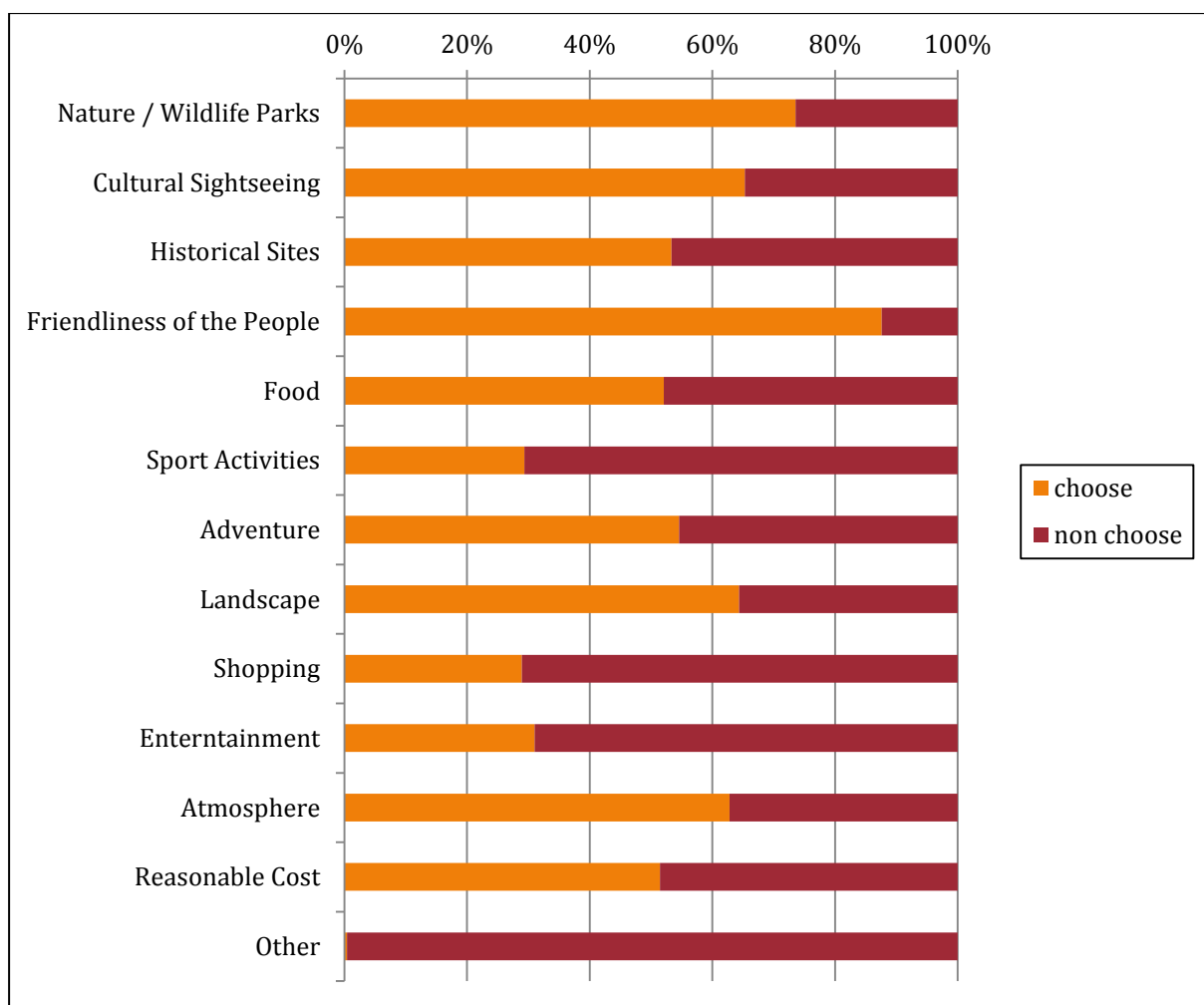


Fig. 45: Reasons named by international tourists for visiting Laos (Source: own investigation; n=242)

For *international tourists*, the most frequently chosen category when asked for their reasons to travel to Laos was the *friendliness of the people*, with an overwhelming 87.6% of respondents who named this category as relevant. This was followed by 73.6% who chose nature and wildlife parks and 65.3% who chose cultural sightseeing as reasons. Unlike the Thai tourists, international tourists were asked about cultural sightseeing and visiting historical sites separately. Since the latter category had less acceptance (53.3%) than the first, it can be concluded, that tourists might be less interested in historic sightseeing than in generally getting to know the different culture, traditions and lifestyles within their travel destination. This can also be deduced from the fact that the rather broadly formulated categories “landscape” and “atmosphere” were also chosen frequently (with 64.3% and 62.8% respectively) by international tourists. Other reasons that were important for international tourists to visit Laos were *adventure* (54.5%), *food* (52.1%) and the *reasonable traveling cost* (51.2%). The first two categories can prob-

ably be explained by the “cultural foreignness” of Laos compared to the home countries of the travelers. However, the naming of the category *reasonable costs* also makes clear that Laos is an attractive country to travel to, even for those people from other countries who might not have a large budget for their trip and who want to travel as cheaply as possible. Like other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, Laos is a typical destination for budget-travelers which has also been covered by known travel guides like the Lonely Planet edition “Southeast Asia on a Shoestring” written by China Williams and co-authors in 2008. What also becomes clear from the categories chosen within the questionnaire is that Laos is not primarily an “event tourism” destination – only 29.3% of the interviewees named sport activities for example as a relevant category while entertainment only mattered to 31.0%. The category chosen least often was shopping (28.9%). This low figure can be explained on the one hand by the range of products which are less adopted to Western consumption and on the other hand to the luggage restrictions of the international airlines.

The motivations of Thai and international tourists to travel to Laos are influenced by a number of socio-demographic factors, which make certain patterns and tendencies visible.

Among the Thai tourists for example, there is a weak, but significant positive correlation between age and “atmosphere” as the objective of travel, indicating that within the Thai sample, older tourists are more likely to travel to Laos to experience the atmosphere. Similar tendencies can be found between the age of international tourists and historical sites as travel objective. In contrast, younger international tourists more commonly travel to Laos for the sake of adventure and the reasonable costs.

It becomes clear from the analysis of the data that reasons to travel to Laos differ remarkably between Thai and international tourists. The first remarkable difference between the two groups is that international tourists generally name more reasons to travel to Laos.

This might be an indication of the fact that Thai tourists have more detailed and precise ideas of what they want to see and do in Laos than international tourists. While Thai tourists seem to be more determined to see the highlights of the (natural) attractions, international tourists have a greater range of interests. For them, traveling is often less target-oriented and is aimed at getting to know a country and people in general. The

major discrepancies of the reasons named for traveling reflect the different cultural and geographic backgrounds of the compared groups. These are exemplified in the importance that is ascribed to the *friendliness* of Laotians and the motive of *adventure-seeking*. While for Thai tourists both categories play a negligible role, they are far more important to international tourists. Since Laos is a country directly neighboring Thailand, it is not surprising that going there for a short trip is not perceived as being an “adventure” by Thais – rather, it is most likely a common way to spend a short-time vacation where the lifestyle and everyday culture are quite similar to the Thai context. For the typical backpacker tourist on the other hand, “seeking adventures”, i.e. traveling to countries that differ significantly to their culture and lifestyles, is part of the fun, and such tourists are often searching for destinations that appear “exotic” and thus “adventurous” to them. Also, especially for Western tourists, Buddhist cultures in general, stand out for their friendliness and peacefulness.

8.1.2.3 Frequency and Duration of trips to Laos

In order to grasp the touristic potential of Laos to become a popular long-term destination within Southeast Asia, the question was raised how often the interviewees had been to Laos before. As can be seen in Figure 46, the majority of Thai tourists in Laos were on their first visit to the country, 23% had visited Laos once before. Only 21% of the sample indicated that they had visited the country at least three times. The high proportion of people visiting Laos for the first time can be explained to some extent by the fact, that Laos has opened its borders to tourists only since the early 1990s and is thus a relatively unknown destination. However in recent years (in particular since 2003), a considerable increase of tourists to Laos has since been recorded which shows that Laos is becoming a booming tourism destination (see chapter 2.6).

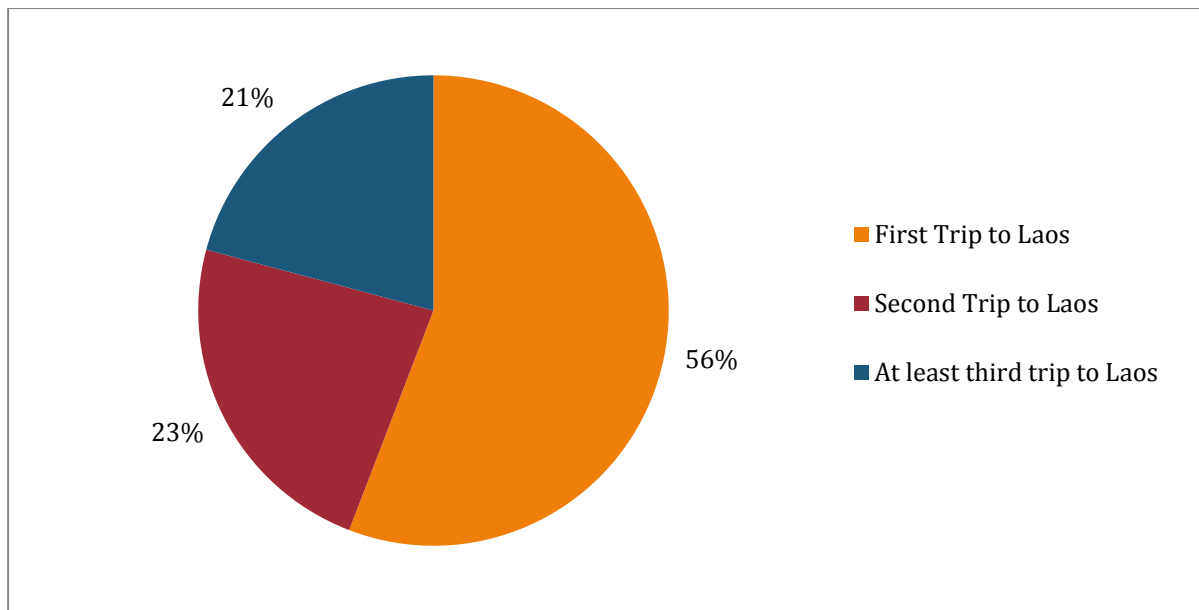


Fig. 46: Previous trips to Laos by Thai tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=240)

For the international tourists two different questions were asked. In the first question they were asked, if it was their first visit to Laos. In the second question they were asked *if* they had been to Laos before, how many times they had visited. Fig.47 shows the results of these two questions combined. 85.2% of the tourists stated that it was their first trip to Laos, roughly 10% were visiting for the second time and about 5% had been to the country more than twice.

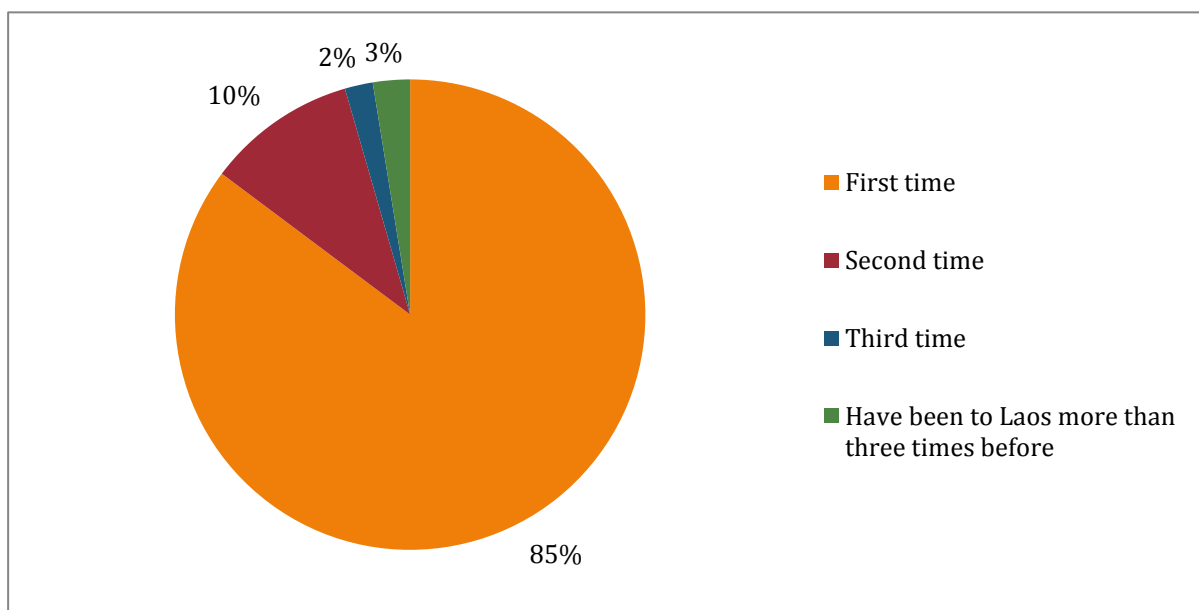


Fig. 47: Previous trips to Laos by international tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=250 for the question: „Is this your first trip to Laos”; n=23 for the question “If not, how often have you been to Laos before?”)

Both the international and the Thai tourists were asked how long their trip to Laos was going to be. Due to the fact that many international tourists combine a trip to several countries in Southeast Asia, the questionnaire was extended. In addition, the international tourists were also asked to indicate the total duration of their stay in Southeast Asia and the total duration of their trip (both within and outside Southeast Asia). The results show that the duration of stay differs immensely between the two groups.

International tourists typically stayed for between ten days and one month in Laos: 90.7% of interviewees answered that their visit to Laos lasted 30 days or less, including 23.5% of respondents who stayed for just 10 days or less, 30% of respondents who stayed for 10 to 20 days and 37.2% of respondents who stayed for 20 to 30 days (see Fig.48). In many cases, international tourists were on a trip through Laos which included not only the Southern parts of the country, but also the North (e.g. Luang Prabang) and the capital Vientiane.

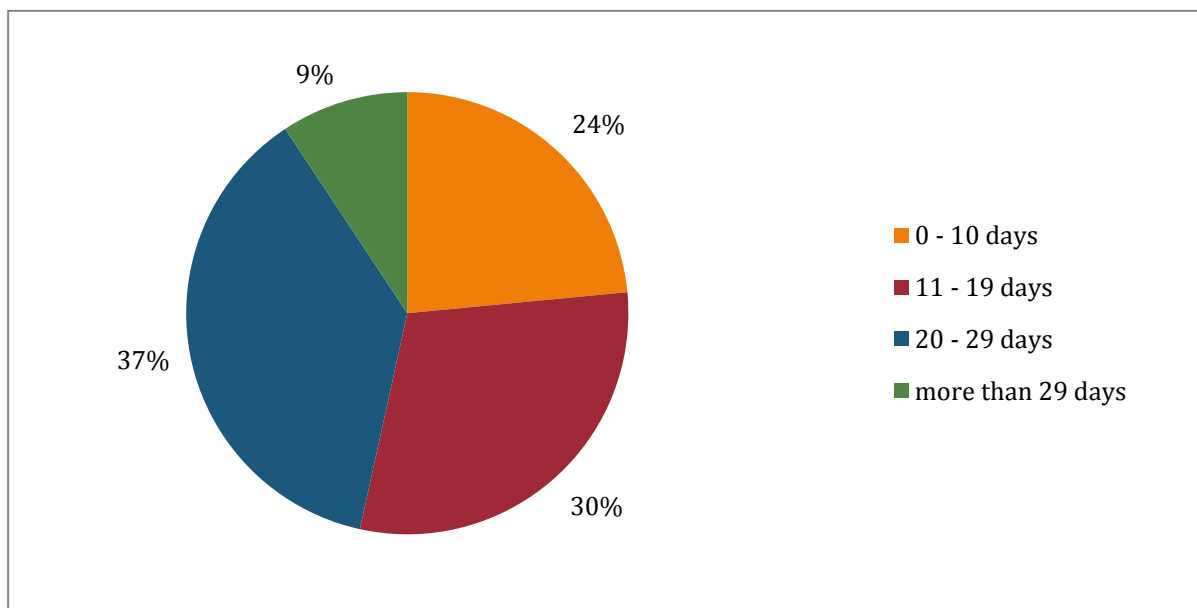


Fig. 48: Duration of the stay of international tourists (Source: own investigation; n=247)

Also for the international tourists, the data shows that the visit to Laos is usually part of a longer journey to more than just one country within Southeast Asia. This becomes clear from the following graphs on the length of the stay in Southeast Asia compared to the length of the stay in Laos and to the overall length of the journey. While only very few tourists stayed longer than one month in Laos (see Fig.48), almost 60% of the interviewees (58.6%) were spending more than one month in Southeast Asia (see Fig.49). Many tourists also included destinations outside of Southeast Asia in their trip: While

most of the tourists (82.0%) didn't stay in Southeast Asia for more than three months, more than half of the interviewees (51.9%) spent more than three months on their *overall* journey including other destinations (see Fig.50). Other destinations that were often visited during the trips were other countries in Southeast Asia, other provinces within Laos as well as countries in East Asia (particularly China), but also in South Asia (see Fig.51).

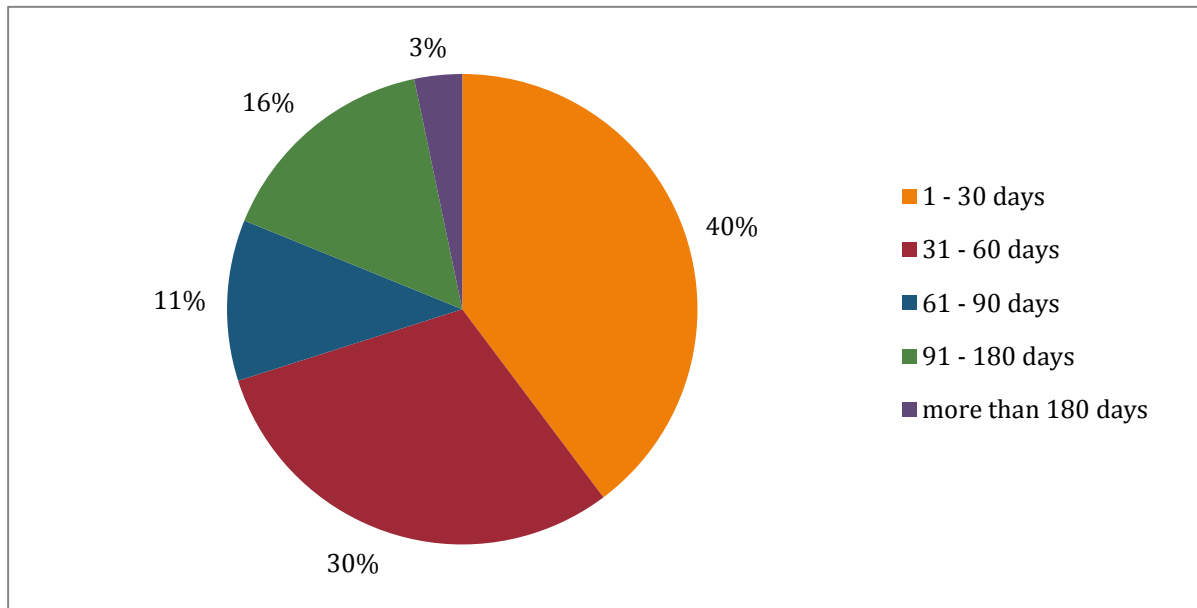


Fig. 49: Length of stay of international tourists in Southeast Asia (Source: own investigation; n=244)

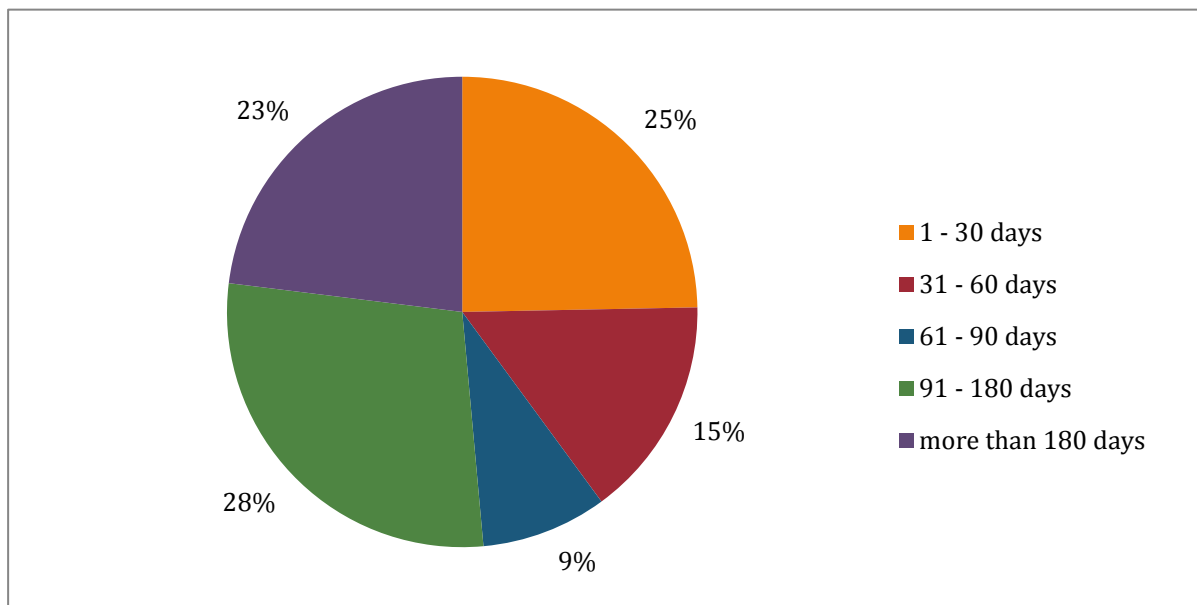


Fig. 50: Duration of the whole trip of international tourists (Source: own investigation; n=243)

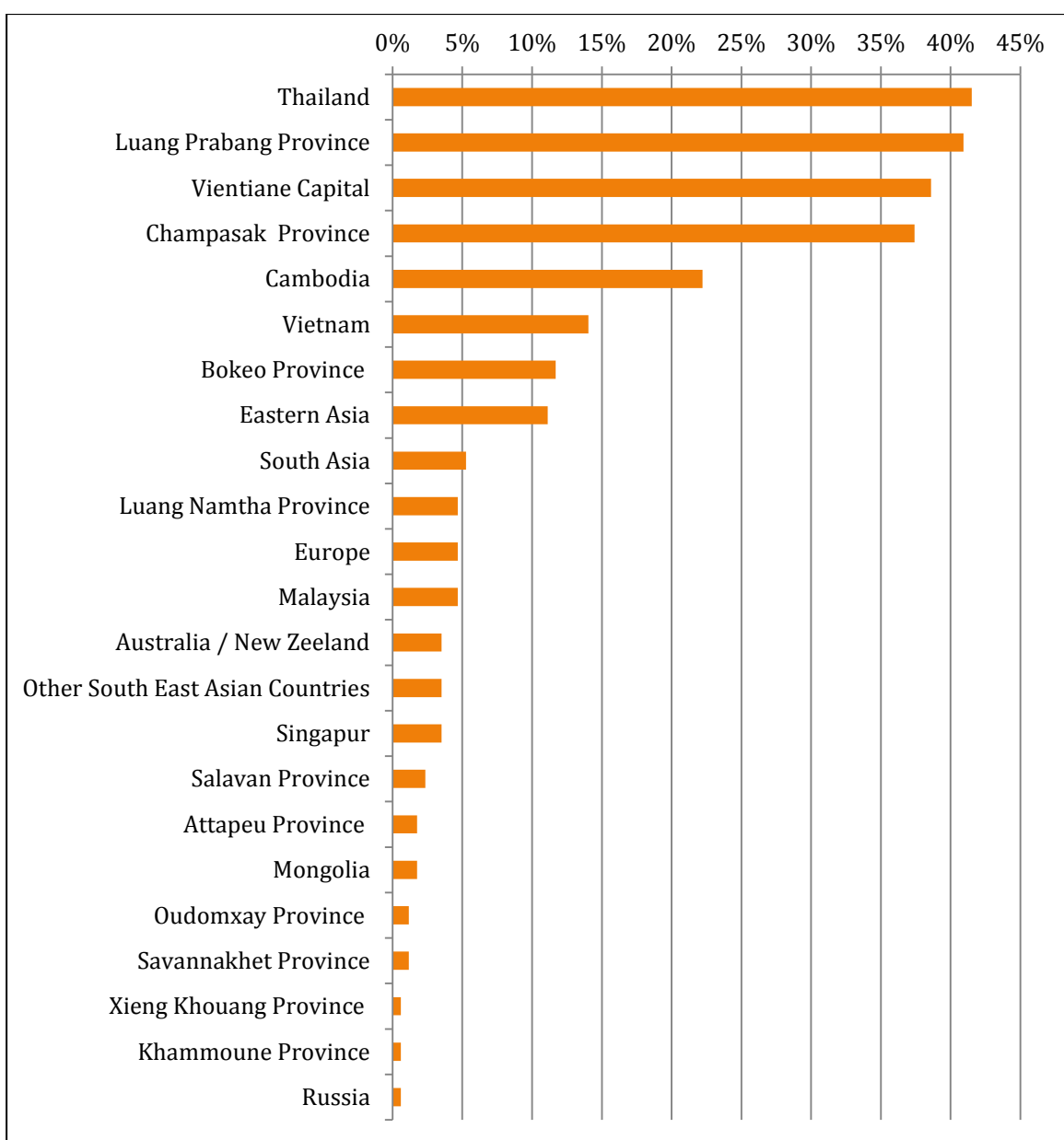


Fig. 51: Further destinations visited during the same trip – International Tourists (Source: own investigation; n=171)

In comparison to the duration of the trips of the international tourists, the Thai tourists spent much less time in Laos. The overwhelming majority of the interviewed Thai tourists (93.3%) stayed in the country for not more than three days, 45.5% stayed for two days and 24.9% of the tourists were on a one day trip only (see Fig.52). It thus becomes clear that for the Thai tourists, Laos is mainly a destination for a weekend trip but not for a longer vacation. This probably has to do with the short distances traveled in order to reach Laos, compared with the international tourists. For many of the Thai tourists, especially for those coming from the Northeastern part of the country, Laos is neither difficult to reach nor culturally foreign. Accordingly, Thai tourists probably tend to travel

directly to see tourism highlights, while the international tourists also spend some time just getting to know the cultural aspects of everyday life.

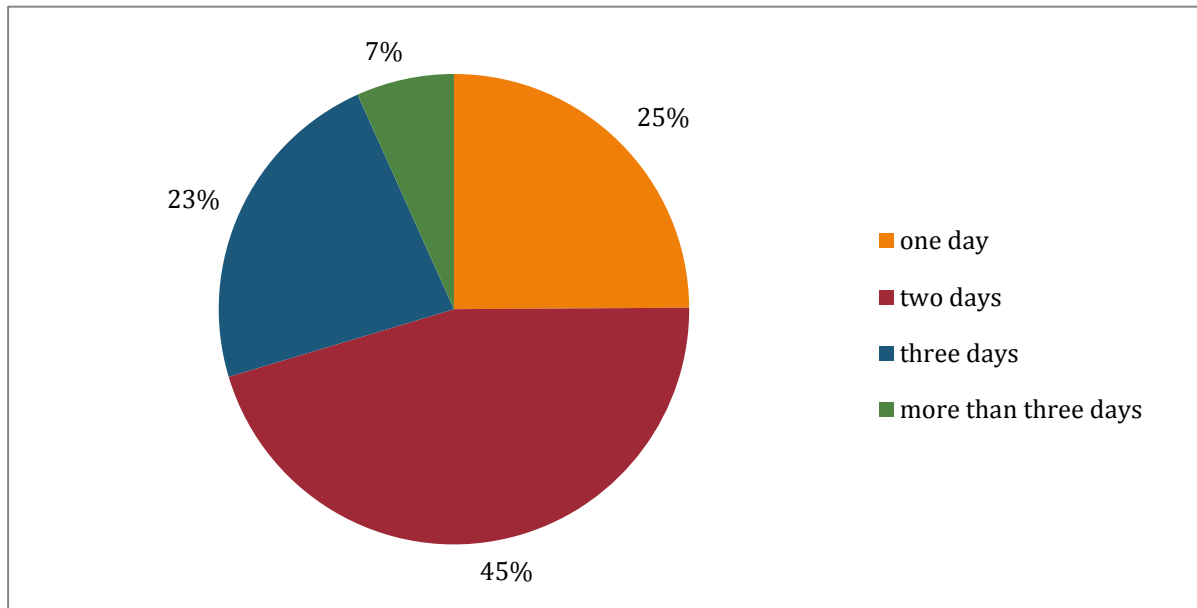


Fig. 52: Duration of stay of Thai tourists in Laos
(Source: own investigation; n=253)

8.1.3 Organization of the trip to Laos

8.1.3.1 Economic factors of tourism to Laos – expenditure of tourists

In Chapter 2, the role of tourism as a key economic factor was discussed and the question was raised, to which extent tourism is an important economic factor for Laos. In the questionnaire it was asked, how much money the interviewees spend on a daily basis and for the whole trip. Due to the reason that the Thai tourists spent Thai baht and the international tourists calculated and planned their trips based on the US dollar, two different categories were applied in the questionnaire (Baht and U.S. dollar). Due to these different currency categories for Thai and international tourists, it is difficult to compare their daily expenditures within Laos. However, when taking a look to the results, it becomes obvious that there is a clear difference between the expenditure behavior of the Thai and international tourists.

When we take a look at Thai tourists, the majority (64.6%) spent less than 5,000 Baht during their time in Laos. Only 5.3% stated that they spent more than 10,000 Baht. The remaining 30% spent more than 5,000 but less than 10,000 Baht (see Fig.53).

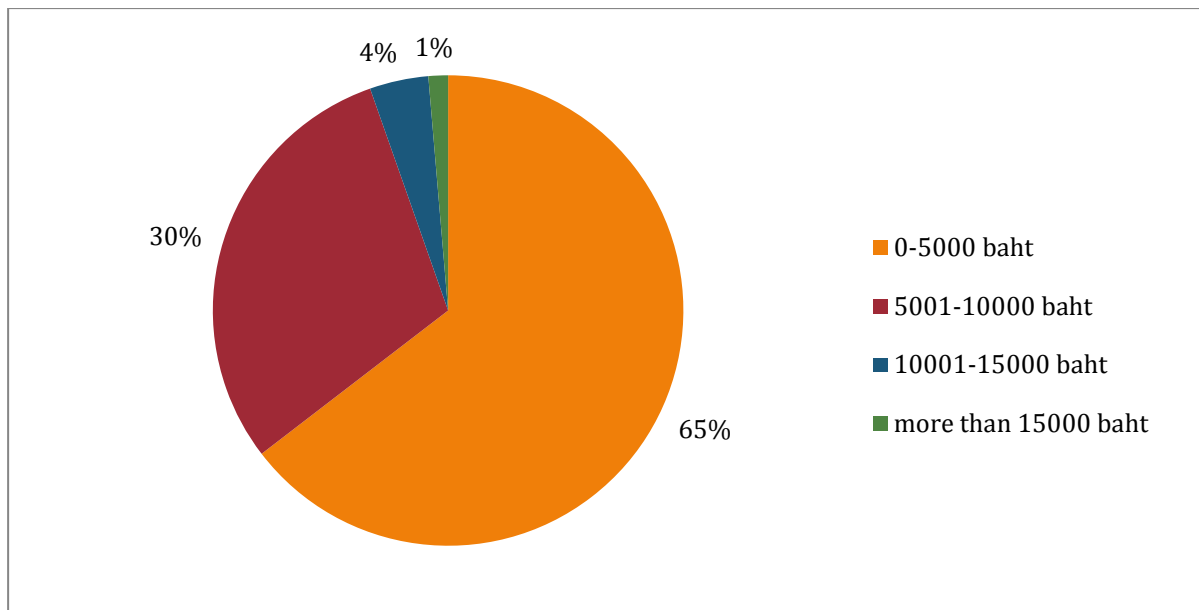


Fig. 53: Overall expenditure of Thai tourists
(Source: own investigation; n= 223)

The following figures (Fig.54) visualise the daily expenses as well as the gross expenses for the whole trip. At first glance it seems to be a small amount. However, when this value is linked to the fact that most Thai tourists only spend the weekend in Laos and looking at the daily expenditure of Thai tourists it becomes clear that this group has relatively high spending per day: More than 60% of interviewees stated that they spend more than 2000 baht (~ 63 U.S. Dollar at the time of the survey) per day.

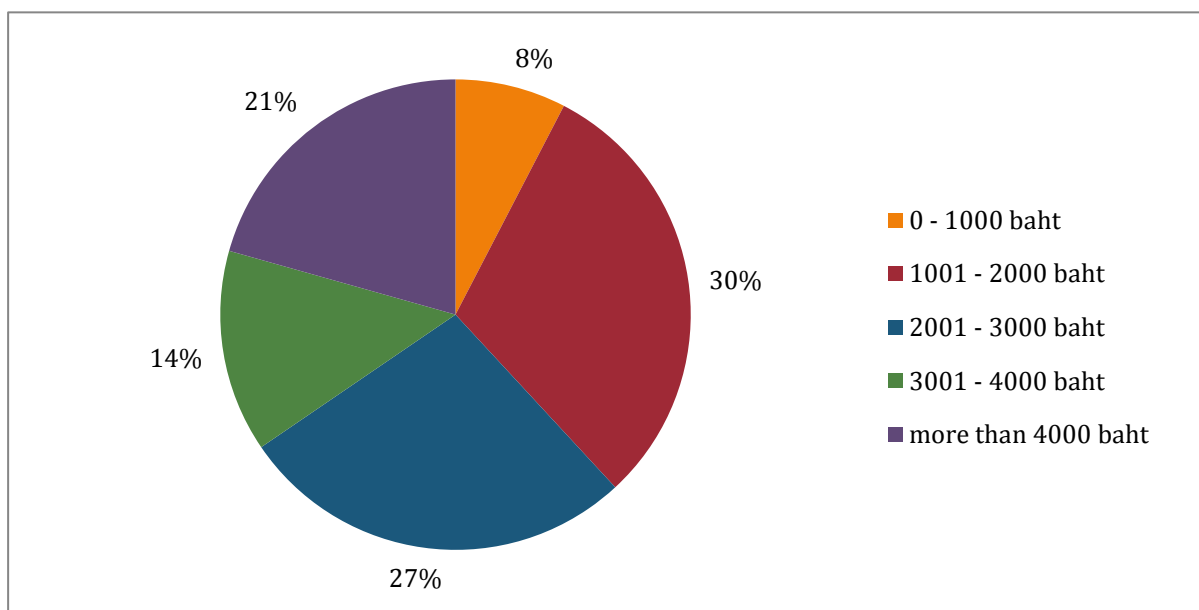


Fig. 54: The average daily expenditure of the Thai tourists in Laos
(Source: own investigation; n=223)

With respect to the question, which economic sectors and social groups gain most of the money spent by the Thai tourists, it was also asked, how their overall expenditures are divided between different items. As Fig.55 shows, the largest share of the money spent by the Thai tourists on the trip went not only into food and beverages, but also into accommodation: 55.0% of the interviewees stated they spent between 26% and 50% of their money on food and beverages, 46.4% answered that between 26% and 50% of their total expenditure went into accommodations. Less money was paid for transportation and shopping: 65.5% of the interviewees said that transportation made up less than 26% of their expenditures; 70.6% reported that they spent less than 26% on shopping. Other spending made up no more than 25% of spending for 97.2% of the Thai tourists (see Fig.55).

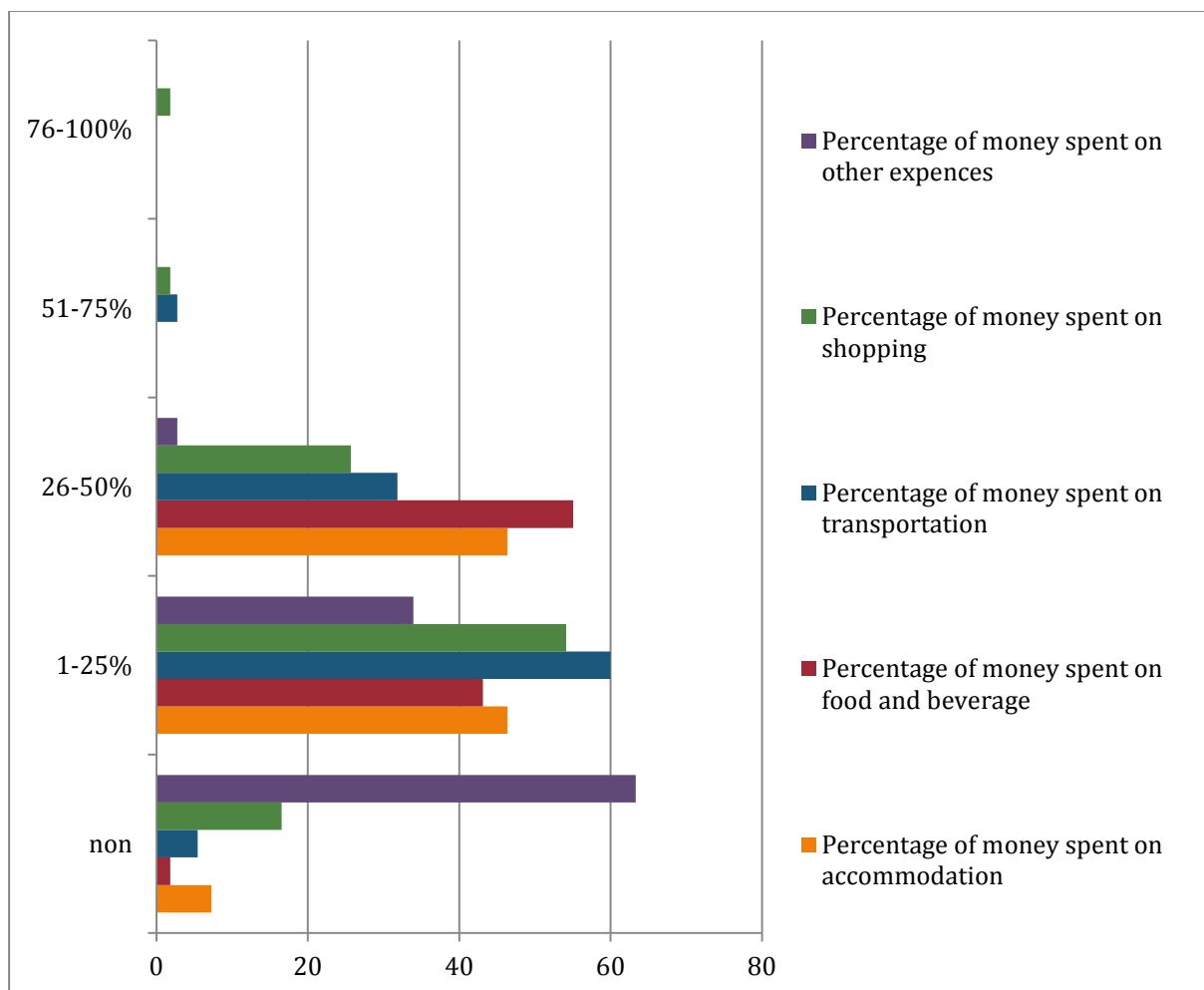


Fig. 55: Expenditures on specific purposes – Thai Tourists
(Source: own investigation; n=109 to 110, depending on spending purpose)

When it comes to the *international tourists* 50% of them spent between \$10 and \$20 (~ between 330 and 660 baht) per day in Laos which was clearly below the daily expenditures of most Thai tourists. Approximately 17% stated that they spent less than \$10 per day, some 19.7% of the international tourists spent more than \$20, but less than \$30. Only 12.6% of the interviewees stated that they spent more than \$30 per day in Laos (see Fig.56).

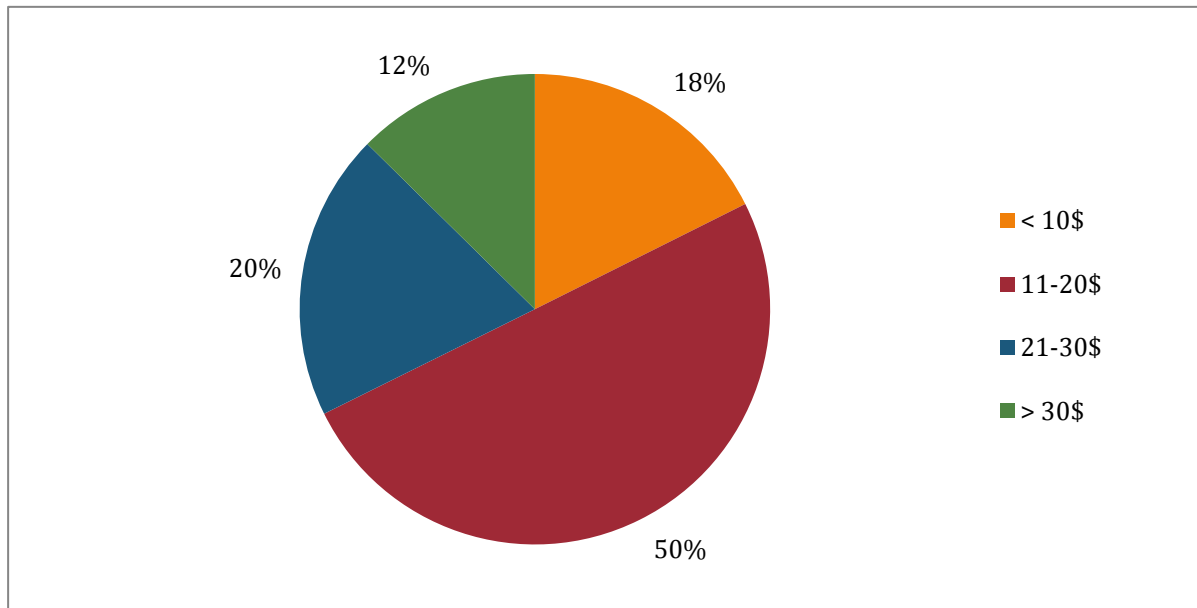


Fig. 56: The average daily expenditure of international tourists (Source: own investigation; n=238)

The share of overall money spent on the trip which is dedicated to different elements of daily expenditure shows, for the most part, the same trends as for the Thai tourists: the most substantial part of the budget is spent on food and beverages with 47.1% of the interviewees stating that these goods make up more than 30% of their total expenditures. The category holding the second position in terms of spending was accommodation, for which 25.5% spent more than 30% of their money, followed by transportation, which accounted for more than 30% of spending for only 15.1% of the interviewees. The largest difference in spending behavior between Thai and international tourists is shown in their shopping behavior: while 29.4% of the Thai tourists said that shopping made up more than 25% of their total expenditure during the tourist trip, only 5.5% of the international tourists reported that they spent more than 20% of their money on shopping.

To summarize, on a daily basis the Thai tourists tend to spend notably more money compared to international tourists. At the same time international tourists usually stay

longer in the country compared to the Thai tourists who typically only come for week-end holidays. Accordingly, both tourist groups are important economic factors for Laos, especially when compared to the economic level of Laos. However it has to be considered that not all social groups within Laos profit equally from the income from tourism. Rather, the trickling down within the economic system is a very complex process. How different the types of interactions and financial exchanges are between the two groups of tourists in Laos becomes particularly visible in the differences between the respective ways of the organization of the trips. As will become clear in the following, a large part of the disparities between Thai and international tourists sketched out so far can be explained by the different modes of traveling.

8.1.3.2 Travel arrangements to Laos

The organization of the trip to Laos – i.e. whether tourists travel individually or with an organized group – is fundamentally different between the Thai and the international tourists. While international tourists usually travel individually (see below), the large majority of Thai tourists (88.8%) travel with an organized group tour, whereas only 10.0% of them travel individually (1.2% had other modes of travel).

Traveling in Groups: The biggest proportion of Thai tourists travel in groups together with friends (59.0%), followed by 28.7% traveling with a relative. 6.8% stated to have “other” travel companions, 4.4% travel together with colleagues and no more than 1.2% of the Thai tourists traveled alone. Tours in bigger groups are usually organized by organizations, or companies. In these groups, the members usually traveled with their colleagues as an excursion or seminar with various aims. Most of these Thai tourists in the sample usually traveled due to an incentive or reward given by their institution each year. Their activities combine work and leisure together, to enhance team-building and to improve the social networking between colleagues. This included networking with colleagues from neighboring countries such as those in Laos. Such visits would often be thematically oriented, having an objective and a topic, for example, to visit and exchange cultures between two countries or to observe and study management of visiting organizations. Most Thai groups looked for tour operators that offered a reasonable price or were the cheapest. However, some groups could afford a higher price and expected better offers or high quality packages. For example, the groups might have their individual requests such as length of stay, class of accommodation and meals, meeting space for the

number of persons traveling based upon which the tour operators would then calculate a specific price. These organized group tours also considered some special requests within the program, such as an easy accessibility to the attractions with bus transfer or short walking distances.

Traveling individually or in smaller groups: An alternative way to travel for international tourists is to individually organize their own trips. Usually, smaller group tours, for example to specific sites that are difficult to reach with public transport, are included in the trip for single days but most of the trip is planned and carried out individually (usually with the help of travel guidebooks like the “Lonely Planet”). Within the sample, the vast majority of 79.2% of the international tourists were traveling individually, only 7.2% were on a group tour (13.6% used other forms of travel). The large majority of international tourists came to Laos for holidays. However there were also a smaller number of people who visited family or had business-related reasons to travel to Laos.

The means and ways of traveling through Laos also varied between the tourist groups. The vast majority of Thai tourists traveled to Laos by bus (73.8%), while 23.0% went by car, and 2.2% used an airplane (see Fig.57). The highly significant correlation of 0.309 between the vehicle used to travel to Laos and the mode of traveling (individually versus group tour) indicates that the dominance of tourists traveling by bus is partly due to the high proportion of Thai tourists traveling within a group tour.

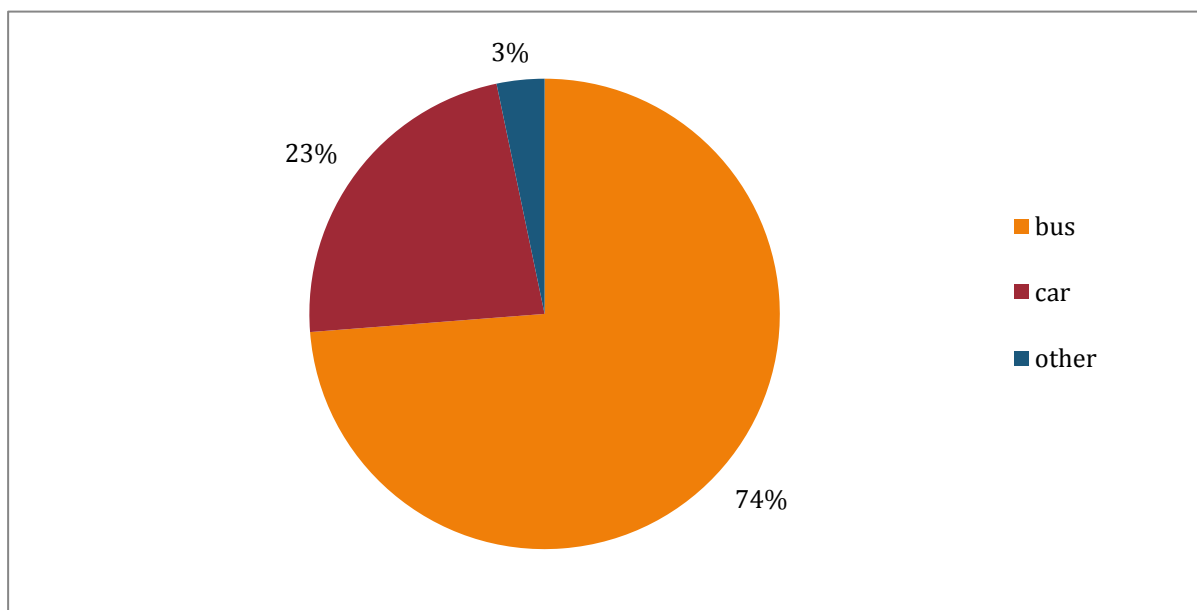


Fig. 57: Means of transportation of Thai tourists (Source: own investigation; n=183)

The mode of traveling of the international tourists is more diverse compared to the organized package tours of most Thai tourists. They usually use public transport and in particular the various bus connection linking the major cities and touristic sites within Laos and between Laos and the neighboring countries (approximately 89% of international tourists have used buses during their journey). This corresponds with the fact that the majority of international tourists are backpackers or other tourists organizing their tour individually. Another important means of transportation for individual travelers are boats, which is not surprising in a country in which the Mekong River and its inflows dominate the landscape. Around 18% of international tourists use boats to reach their destinations, followed by rental cars (6.6%), airplanes (5%), bikes (2.7%) and other means of transportation (6.1%) (see Fig.58).

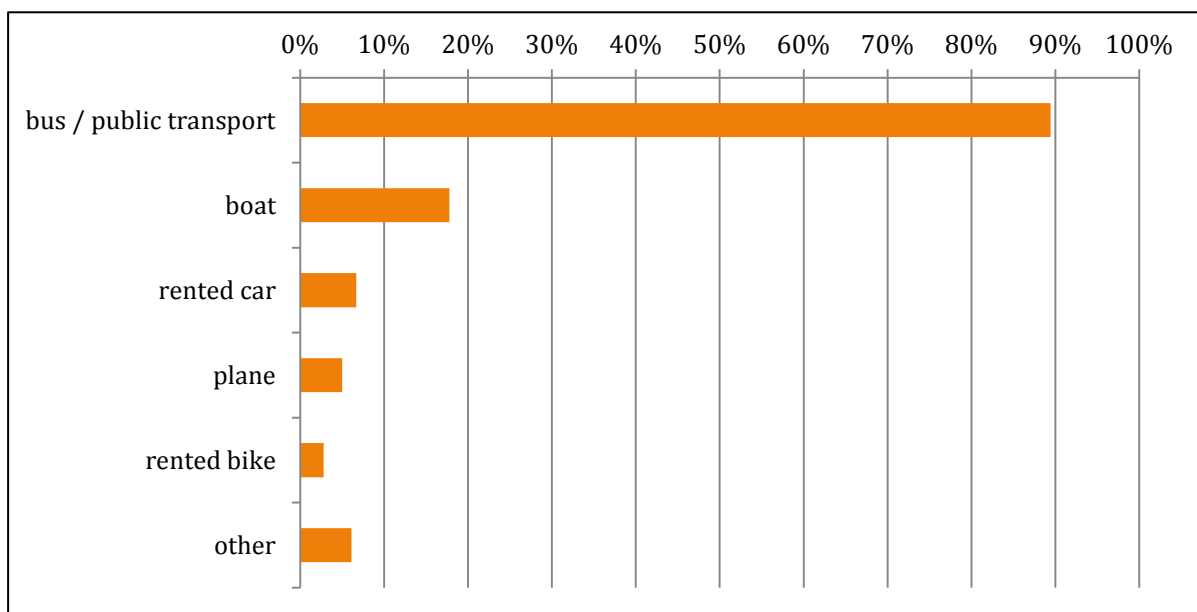


Fig. 58: Means of transportation used by international tourists (Source: own investigation; n=180, multiple answers were permitted)

8.1.3.3 Accommodation

Besides transportation, the preferences for accommodations also show important differences between the demands of Thai and international tourists. Whereas the vast majority of Thai tourists (89%) prefer to stay in a hotel or a resort, 83% of the international tourists prefer guest houses. Surprisingly, no international tourists indicated resorts as their preferred accommodation type. The following figure (Fig.59) compares the two target groups and visualizes this clear difference.

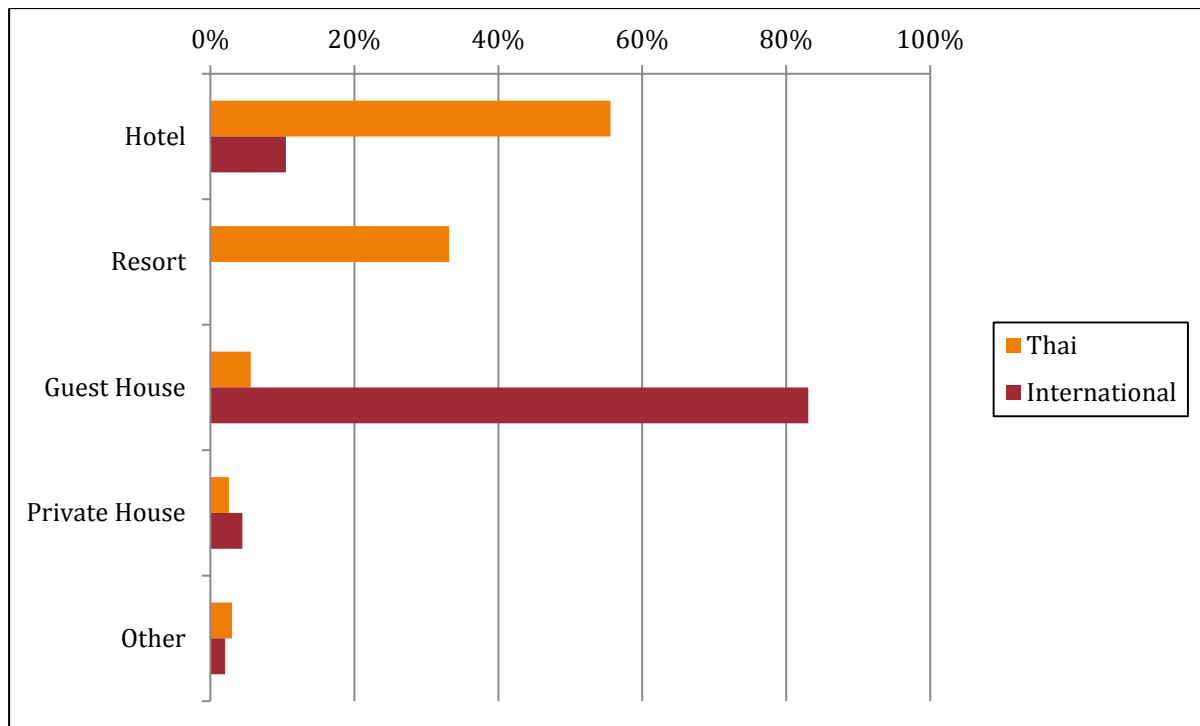


Fig. 59: Preference of accommodation compared between Thai and international tourists

(Source: own investigation; n=232 for the Thai sample; n=248 for the international sample)

8.1.4 Ratings and perceptions of Laos as a tourist destination – similarities and differences between Thai and international tourists

The following chapters illustrate the ratings, evaluations and attitudes of international and Thai tourists towards the tourist destinations in Laos. The depiction of the results is organized into different aspects. For the individual topics and aspects, the results of the international sample and the Thai sample will be discussed and compared jointly in order to show differences as well as similarities of the two groups and to be able to show what aspects are characteristic for the perception of Laos as a touristic destination regardless of the cultural background of the travelers and which aspects are distinct for only one of the two groups.

Using the statistical tool of cross-tabulation it will also be analyzed what differences exist between certain groups within the two samples or in other words, what socio-demographic features influence the answers given and what patterns could be identified in these perceptions and views.

8.1.4.1 Satisfaction with the infrastructure, tourist attractions and the price level

In general, international tourists rate the infrastructure, tourist attractions and the level of prices in Laos better than the Thai tourists do. This may be due to lower expectations among the international tourists, for whom the difference in GDP between their home countries and the travel destination is very large and who thus might not be surprised to be confronted with less comfort and worse travel conditions than they are used to in their everyday lives. Furthermore some international tourists might hesitate to criticize the infrastructure in Laos due to the reason of politeness. In contrast, many Thai tourists seem to expect a far better cost-performance ratio than the international tourists do. One explanation for the relatively higher expectations among Thai tourists may be that most Thai tourists travel within a package tour and expect a tour package of a certain quality. Some might also be disappointed by the relatively long travel times needed for a trip to Laos. Also, for the Thai tourists the difference in living costs compared to Laos are not quite as large as for the international tourists. Accordingly they might expect the infrastructure in Laos to be similar to that in Thailand. Yet in most parts of Laos, especially in many peripheral regions, this is clearly not the case after long years of socialist politics and weak economic performance.

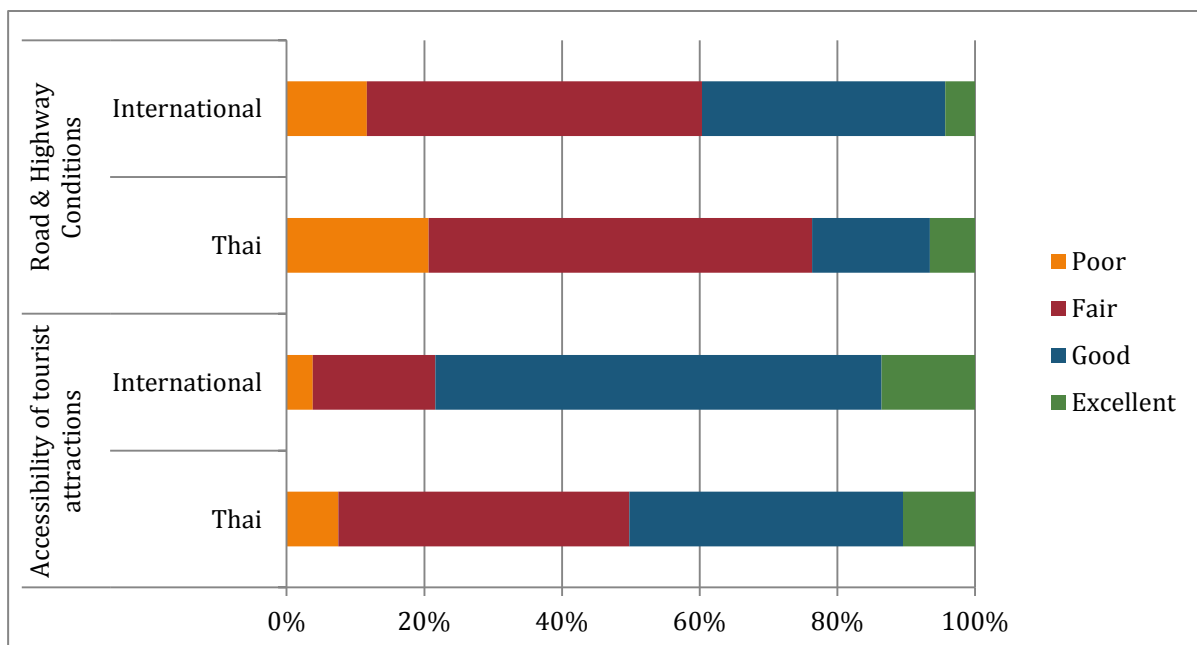


Fig. 60: Satisfaction with accessibility and with road or highway conditions (Source own investigation; n=228 to 239)

A first example where a general difference between Thai and international tourists can be shown is the evaluation in the accessibility of touristic sites and of the road and

highway conditions within the country (see Fig.60). While 39.6% of the international tourists consider the road or highway conditions to be good or excellent, only 23.7% of the Thai tourists state that the road conditions are good or excellent. Although the differences between the two samples are remarkable, it still has to be noted that there has been a noteworthy proportion of international tourists (60.3%) who rate the road conditions as poor or fair. With respect to the developments of the condition of roads in recent years, there was a hypothesis formulated that travelers who were using older editions of their travel guidebook might have lower expectations and thus rate the actual road conditions better than those tourists using newer guidebooks. Unfortunately, there were not enough cases in the questionnaire of tourists who had used older guidebooks in order for the statistical test to produce significant results. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the correlation would have been significant in a larger sample.

Similarly to the question about travel conditions, the international tourists evaluated tourist safety slightly more positively than the Thai tourists (see Fig.61): 79.7% of the international tourists consider safety to be good or excellent, compared to 73.3% of the Thai tourists. Overall, it can be seen from these results that the general security situation in Laos with its eventful history does not represent a discouraging issue for tourists to visit the country.

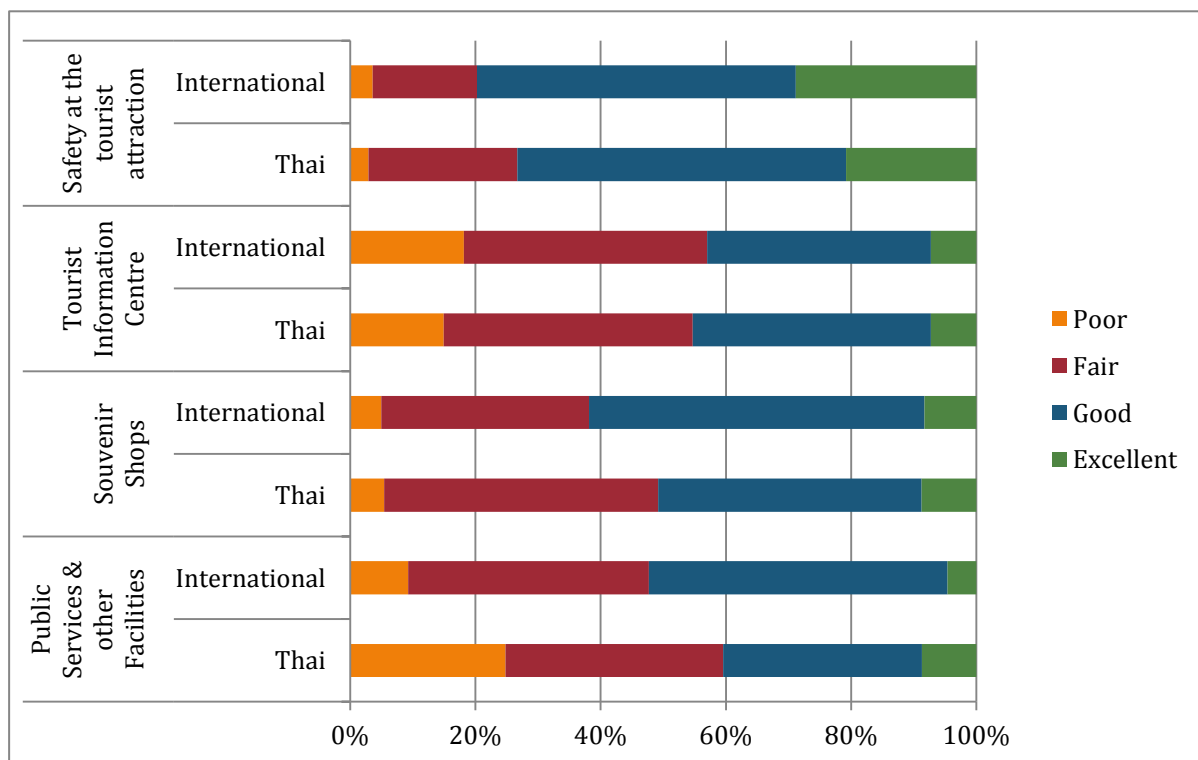


Fig. 61: Satisfaction with services, facilities and safety (Source: own investigations; n=181 to 240)

When looking at satisfaction with price levels (see Fig.62), 81.2% of the international tourists in the sample regarded the accommodation prices as good or excellent, compared with 56.5% of Thai tourist respondents. This showed that international tourists consider accommodations to be far cheaper than the Thai tourists. Whereas the vast majority of the international tourists (80.6%) rated the food and beverage prices to be good or excellent, only 53% of the Thai tourists shared this view. A far bigger proportion of the international tourists (83.4%), compared to the Thai interviewees (57%) regarded the prices in Laos to be fair or excellent.

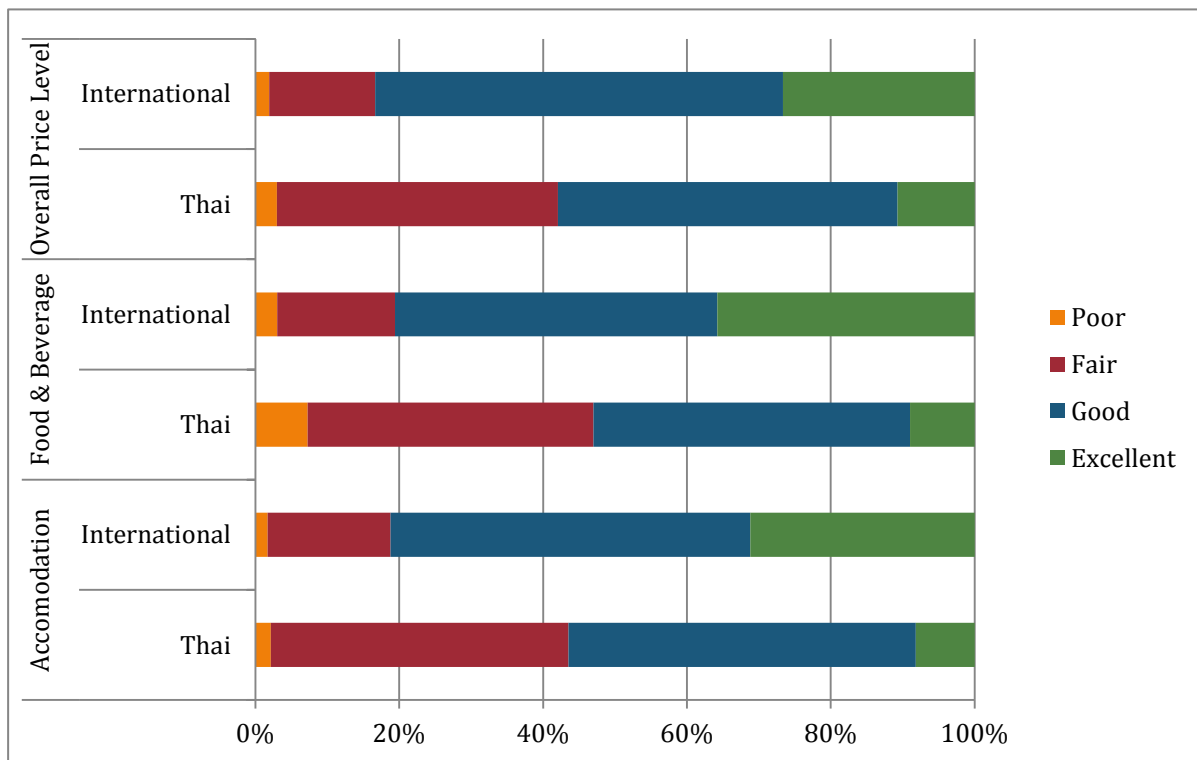


Fig. 62: Satisfaction with price level of selected categories
(Source: own investigation; n=210 to 234)

These general tendencies are also reflected in the ratings of tourist attractions and related activities (see Fig.63). More Thai tourists (9.2%) rate the facilities on the attraction sites as poor compared with international tourists (2.8%). In contrast, 65.1% of the international tourists consider the facilities to be good or excellent, as opposed to 49.6% of the Thai tourists. Thai tourists of 29.5% rated the attractions excellent while international tourists showed 19.4%. Poor attractions 1.3% of Thai tourists rated this category and 0.5% rated from international tourists.

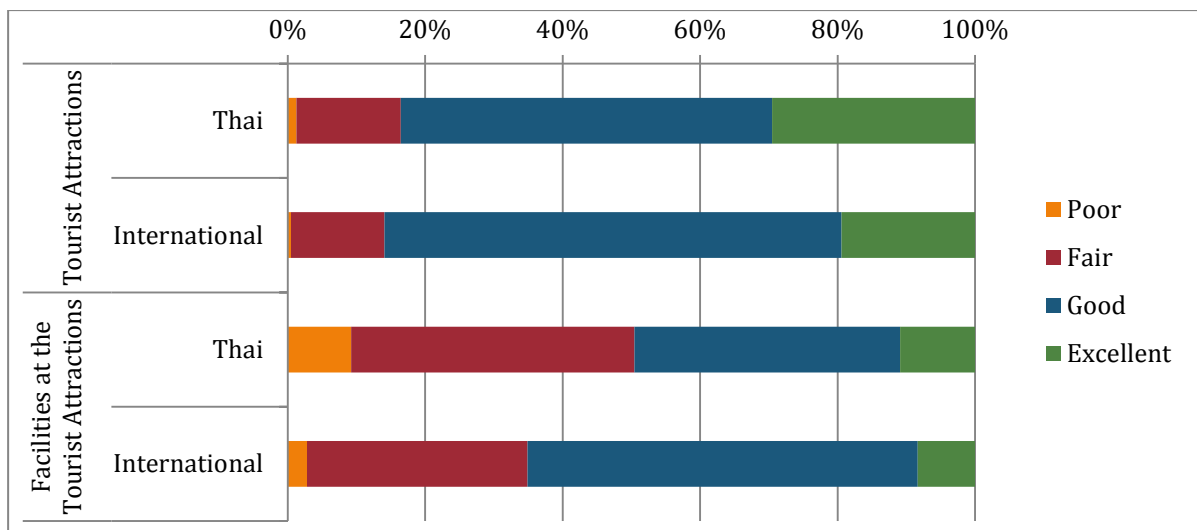


Fig. 63: Satisfaction with tourist attractions
(Source: own investigation; n=157 to 238)

Satisfaction with the friendliness of the people and the accommodations was also generally high among both groups of visitors. However, both items are also rated better by the international tourists than by the Thais (see Fig.64). Although a vast majority of the Thai tourists rates the friendliness of the people as good or excellent in Laos (80.5%), the view of the international tourists on the friendliness of the people is even more positive, with 95.8% of the international tourists interviewed considering the friendliness of the people to be good or excellent. More international tourists (66.2%) rated accommodations as good compared to Thai tourists (45.6%).

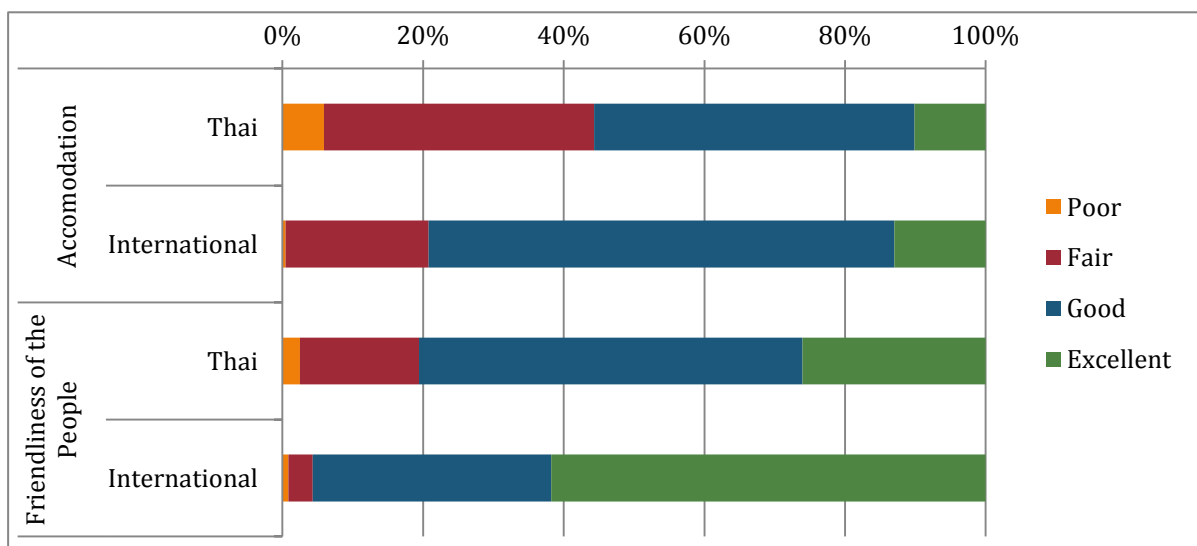


Fig. 64: Satisfaction with accommodation and the local people
(Source: own investigation; n=224 to 242)

8.1.4.2 Satisfaction with individual tourist attractions

Regarding specific tourist sites, satisfaction of Thai tourists centered upon Khonephapheng Falls which was ranked the best, as 84.6% saw the falls as good or excellent. Meanwhile, the Bolaven plateau scored worst, since 41.8% were only poorly or fairly satisfied. For international tourists, Si Phan Don was rated the best, with 95% of the tourists evaluating it as good or excellent. However, when the tourists were asked for their favorite sights, Don Det scored the best (40,4%) instead. The least favorite tourist attraction among the international tourists was Pak Se. 49.6% of tourists rated it to be of poor or fair quality. Partly, there were strong correlations between the satisfactions of different tourist attractions. Thai tourists who wanted to visit natural attractions and preferred the landscape and atmosphere ranked the Elephant Trekking better than average tourists. Similarly the international tourists who came to Laos for the sake of landscape ranked Khonephapheng Falls better, whereas those tourists who came to Laos for the sake of nature & wildlife parks tend to be more satisfied with the Elephants Treks.

Overall the results of the quantitative analysis of the survey of travel behaviors and ratings of tourist destinations among Thai and international tourists have shown, that these two groups, although showing similarities in some respects, differ greatly with respect to how they like to travel, what they want to experience and how much they are willing to pay for their journey. For the supply side this poses the questions, how providers of touristic services react to these different demand structures.

8.2 Tourism supply in Southern Laos

In order to reveal information not only about the consumer and demand side of tourism but also about the offering side, qualitative interviews were conducted among tourism entrepreneurs like hoteliers, managers and business persons in Ubonratchathani (northeastern Thailand), Champasack (southern Laos) and Vientiane involved in the tourism sector. The question of how these suppliers perceive of people consuming travel and tourism products constituted the focal point in this research. But also the situation and changes before and after the opening of the borders were a crucial topic during the interviews. In addition to that, cooperation and support with the public sector as well as the general problems and suggestion for possible improvements were discussed. One of the major topics during the interviews was the general aspect of tourism development

and resulting problems for the tourist destinations and attractions. Furthermore the question of marketing and revenues of tourism were discussed as well as the deeper impacts of tourism on the environment and socio-cultural setting. Last but not least, future perspectives on transnational tourism were subject of the discussions. In the following, the main results of the qualitative research are presented.

8.2.1 Supply strategies for the different touristic groups

Most of the interviewees from the private sector highlighted that there is enormous competition within the tourism sector. The interviews illustrated the constraints as well as the potentials which are linked to the competition for tourists. There was general agreement that the tourism sector has to improve the level of compatibility with other regions in order to meet tourist expectations and attract them. It further revealed that from the tour business side, accommodation has represented a major issue for Lao tourism.

Most of the owners of tourist accommodations stated that they provide services to meet different expectations from both tourist groups and a lot of suppliers of accommodations specialise their offers for either international or Thai tourists.

"...Most Thai tourists who visited Champasack preferred much comfortable stay in guesthouses, good renovation with private bathrooms. This definitely includes clean facilities on properties and specific meal (...) they (tour operators) requested sometimes a particular set of Thai dishes. We depend more on Thai groups, for example, on official holidays in Thailand, over weekends, long weekends and special or on-requested tour from Thai tourists. Each group was at least 30 people in general..."
(Interview 18).

Compared to the expectations of Thai tourists described in the last quote, suppliers experienced the demands of international tourists with regard to the accommodation as being quite different. The requirements were not as high-standard compared to the Thai tourists who often had specific wishes on the procedure of their holiday trips.

"... Most Farang (foreigners) looked for accommodations without facilities like television, telephones, air-conditions, they did not want even fans when the weather

turns hot (...). They loved to experience the natural touch, down-to-earth feeling, did not mind to share bathrooms, and had no requests on comfortable materials. However, personal hygiene was different ..." (Interview 18).

From the interviews with the owners of hotels and guesthouses in Laos, the greatest differences with regard to the expectations concerning the accommodation could be observed between hotels that hosted Thai tourists and those that accommodated mainly international tourists. Both types of accommodation show major differences that are due to different expectations of customers (see above) and thus different strategies of the suppliers of the lodgings. It shows that Thai tourists would like much more comfortable facilities during their trips when they choose the package tour to southern Laos. They would also prefer the favorite meal if it could be provided. Business owners were mentioned as the most attractive target customers. The requests of Thai tour groups were always fulfilled as far as possible, since tour operators get direct feedback from their costumers and thus would make decisions for future arrangements dependent on the satisfaction of the tourist groups they were in charge for. Meanwhile, Western tourists for the most part had different requests. Indeed, cleanliness was a priority point for them to choose a place to stay. However, this does not mean that Thai tourists were less concerned with hygiene than Western tourists. Instead, each group simply displayed a different order of preferences to comfort them most.

Based on the interviews with different tourism entrepreneurs, similarities and differences about the various tourists were identified. Similar to the quantitative data, the tour operators observed that there is; (1) a tendency for group trips rather than individual travel among Thai tourists; (2) in general a desire for travel experiences in a different setting was observed and in particular for the international tourists, the otherness and the different geographical and cultural background was perceived as attractive; on the other hand the tour entrepreneurs also observed a certain (3) lack of willingness to give direct feedback to the service provider about the quality of the service among Thai tourists. An explanation for this might be the fact that most Thai tourists only stayed for few days during which they enjoyed themselves fully and were therefore not willing to spend some time for the evaluation of the services of the tour operators; in addition to that (4) the meal patterns differed between the two groups of tourists; and (5) different

traveling patterns, between short excursions with the reason for photo snapshots for Thais, and long-planned daily expeditions to the touristic or historical sites for international tourists, including the different types of accommodation (luxury or budget hotels etc.) were responded to by the interviewees (March, 1997). For the tourism entrepreneurs, it was essential to understand these different demands of the tourists in order to adjust and improve their offers and services to the latter's needs.

8.2.2 General strategies of tourism companies

The tour operators understood the new phenomenon of transnational tourism as a big chance and believed that tourism in Laos will continue to be a valuable resource for the country. This perception was linked to the observation of the tour operator that the number of international tourists who visit Laos tends to grow year by year. This entailed a considerable increase of hotels and guesthouses which were constructed all over the country and enhanced the number of overnight stays. Indeed the adaptation to the new phenomenon of transnational tourism was discussed during the interviews.

The owner of a travel company in Ubonratchathani, Thailand, provided information on tour program offerings for both domestic tourists and international tourists that in I-san there were no high or low season, the packages to be sold must be differed by the price. For promotion on her company's packages, there were not much different in method for marketing. The price was key element to present and offer to customers. The quality of the program in general depends on the price; for example, the higher price will offer accommodation with higher rating system as stars, means of transportation (in some program referred to airlines company), food and beverage arrangement. She also mentioned "ghost operator" (any tourism business that did not legally registered at the Bureau of Tourism Business and Guide Registration⁵⁶ in Thailand) that become problem among tourism business when these non-registered companies set up with low cost of investment tried to reduce the tour price in order to make sell volume as high as possible. However, she confirmed that in terms of price incentive, it affected definitely the quality tour program in each detail as she stated in following interview.

⁵⁶ Department of tourism, Ministry of tourism and sports.

"(...) I am concerned more about 'non-registered tour operators'. The quality of the tour program in detail was totally different in my opinion, when the non-registered ones tried to cut costs as much as possible in competitive ways (...)" (Interview 10).

The following interview represented another way of tour arrangement in Southeast Asia.

"(...) One operator, for example, with many contacts to agencies in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, has more advantages to hospitalize their tourists. Tourists might initiate their program via operators from their countries which had contacted the local operators in Laos. When tourists arrive in Vientiane, they will be transferred to southern Laos by minibus and be referred to one agency at the destination areas." (Interview 11).

From above, the way to organize for tourists by each operator with many contact companies in tourism sectors, was to be in connection of the tour operators in destination countries called "land" (a spoken term for tour operators located and belong to the countries which the tour program covered; and these operators are in contact with each other for doing business in each deal together. When package tours were sold to tourists, an arrangement when tourists arrived at destinations was responsible by "land" operator. For example, a package tour to northeastern Thailand-southern Laos-Vietnam sold by a Vietnamese company; it was started from the Vietnamese tour operator (seller) had an operator in Thailand (land-Thai) arranged the program route from Thailand (Ubonratchathani) to southern Laos and the task for "land-Thai" was transferred to land-Lao for the destinations in Laos. Then the Vietnamese tour operator took care of the rest of the program with regard to Vietnam. That is the way they (tour operators) organized the tour business and managed cost and profits together. Normally all travel companies had their own lists of "land", and kept in contact with different tour programs. Moreover, it depended upon factors and situations that determine which land must be chosen at the time such as prices, offers and the capacity to serve different groups.

Besides the networking between the different tour operators, the quality of the service represents a crucial strategy to enhance the tourists to come again or to recommend the respective operator to other tourists. In order to maintain a good business and reputation, the companies always try to keep the services on a high level and to involve the wishes and demands of the tourists. In this context the direct feedback of the tourists was important, as one operator stated that:

“To follow up customer satisfaction, the company prepared for ‘feed-back’. Tourists were always asked for comments and suggestions regarding hotel, meal and the guides and other issues or experiences during their travels (...)” (Interview 22).

The operators also analyzed the feedback from the tourists and forwarded the results to the relevant partners with the aim to improve the service quality. One major purpose of improvement is that to maintain a good business both by keeping amount of previous customers and by prospecting new coming ones. Regarding to direct feedback from customers in chapter 8.2.1, positive feedback or good reputation would be key elements to help maintaining customers to come back again and for attracting the future customers. This satisfaction idea as described in the literature. *“The goal for the tour operator must be to build and maintain a basis of committed customers who stay loyal. Despite clarification of the relationship between loyalty and service quality, in tourism contexts, when this has been asked for, quality of service is generally assumed to affect business performance and loyalty in a positive way. Dissatisfied customers are said to be more willing to change to another provider than satisfied ones”* (Hanefors/Mossberg, 1999, 189).

Although tourism companies in general tried to meet the expectations of their customers and to guarantee their satisfaction during the trip, there were different levels of service. For example, important customers, the company tried everything to provide the highest level of service and it was important to keep any mistakes as far away as possible. Most interviews agreed with the levels of service and most used brochures as another channel for marketing their offers. As the following interview stated that:

“(...) to maintain good business and reputation, the company kept its service at a high level. In some packages with low budgets offered, we tried to keep minimum

standards. For VIP customers, it was important to keep any mistakes away as possible. For marketing, brochures were primarily used to incorporate opportunities from the international mass communication system which produced programs about tourism in Laos in order to broadcast to other countries ...” (Interview 11)

However, the tour operators had expressed their opinions in the same direction that in some packages with low budget, the companies were not able to maintain the same standards due to restrictions in price but they still tried to keep a certain standard.

8.2.3 Tourism supply for Thai tourists

Hotels and guesthouses that were targeted for Thai tourists often had contracts or connections with specific tour operators. In some cases there were direct connections to tourism agencies in Thailand. This close link between the stakeholders in Laos and the agencies in Thailand made the coordination and organization of organized group tours for Thai tourists possible and easy. The tour operators in Laos provided accommodation regularly for groups from Thailand who traveled to southern Laos in designated tour programs. Such programs completely included accommodations, gastronomy and transportations, in addition to that which was required during the trip, including visits to entertainment places like night clubs or pubs.

The tourism programs offered for Thai tourists thus show the typical characteristics of package tours as they have been described in the literature. *“The package tour, package holiday, and package travel are all-inclusive tours, often with flight transportation, all with limited flexibility, and with the same purpose”* (Hanefors/Mossberg, 1999, 186). For example, they had common features such as being less expensive yet covering many attractions, in comparison to arranging transportation costs and accommodation separately. This gives the tourist on a package tour the possibility to visit a large number of sites in a short period of time. And there is no need either for time or skills to arrange the tour by themselves, and tourists were able to take advantage of the tour with lower prices. Although most of the characteristics of package tours described above apply to package tours organized for Thai tourists traveling to Laos, two major differences remain:

1. Thai package tours to Laos usually involve a trip in a minivan and not a flight, since this is far less expensive and not considerably less comfortable, given the relatively short travel distances.
2. Groups from Thailand that travel on a group tour often consist of members that have known each other before the trip and are related either privately or officially (e.g. excursions organized by companies or institutions).

For this, accommodation facilities had a major significance and were considered as main development factors for a destination because they were of major importance to the target-group of Thai tourists. Also the time period of the program offered was crucial to meet the demands of the Thais. Organized tours or programs containing full service were often booked by employers for their employees or groups of colleagues which are restricted in their time frame; weekend and extended weekend.

One interview expressed additional comments on the season of traveling in Laos as there were not only Thai tourists coming during Laos's festival holidays, but also a number of Laos travelers in some occasions.

"... in some occasions, when there were festivals or cultural tour programs for Laos travelers, we even were provided additional transportation for them, as the public transportation was not enough..." (Interview 11).

Due to this reason the offers are mainly during national festivals in Laos and Thailand but also on request. One interviewee (see above) expressed that with those festivals on some occasions, the tour operator not only had to provide facilities to international visitors or the Thai groups, but also arranged extra transportation when a number of domestic tourists exceeded public transport capacity.

8.2.4 Tourism supply for international tourists

Compared to the Thai tourists, the demands and wishes of international (mainly western) tourists differed in many cases (see chapter 8.1). Due to this demand, some of the stakeholders of tourism in Laos tried to adapt to the demands of international and

transnational tourism. This is of particular concern for the hospitality⁵⁷ sector. In southern Laos most of the actors within this sector made an effort to attract more international tourists than Thai tourists. Often the accommodations are planned and designed close to nature (so-called down-to-earth guesthouses). For the Western tourists, the authentic and relaxing atmosphere was more important than luxury facilities like, for example, television, mini bars or air conditioning. This fits with the observation, that the most Western tourists were backpackers with the aim to discover the country and its people.

From the interviews it became also clear that the majority of the international tourists and backpackers organized their trips on their own and searched for tourist information using different tools. In recent decades the internet was one of the most important sources of information but still the travel guide books are very popular for the organization of the trips. Therefore it is essential for the tourism entrepreneurs to have access and to be present in these sources like for example the *Lonely Planet* which is still the dominant travel guide book on the market as stated in the literature. *"With it guides translated into several languages, by the late 1990s Lonely Planet had become 'the largest independent travel-book company in the English-speaking world'"* (Callahan, 2011, 98). While the other tourists traveled with full services organized by tour operators, the international tourists made their travel decisions on the basis of the information they could get.

In an interview with the Chamber of Commerce in Ubonratchathani, the president of the Chamber of Commerce presented new opportunities under the project of Economic Cycle in Indochina Thai-Laos-Vietnam-Cambodia (see Fig.65). This idea followed upon, as previous described in Chapter 6.3, the route connection for development of package tours between Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The president suggested that the new route was not only for trade and investment purposes but also for tourism business and indeed tourists could take advantage of new destinations in this region. He believed that the project would help support tourism growth. As such, tourism operators would be able to offer alternatives program and new routes to international tourists (and Thai travelers in future). The circle tour takes a longer time to travel around, as it lasts at least seven days to cover the program. For example, there is the route from Ubonratchathani-Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh. However, the circle program might be more at-

⁵⁷ Food, drink or services that are provided by an organization for guests, customers, etc.

tractive to international travelers than to Thai tourists. In general Thai tourists will experience disadvantages due to the constraints of travel time. Thai tourists generally spend less time than western tourists to travel.



Fig. 65: Economic Circle in Indochina
(Source: Ubonrachathani Chamber of Commerce, April 2008)

8.2.5 Views from government agencies on organization of tourism in Southeast Asia

The interviews with the government agencies illustrated policies and the direction of cooperation between the two countries, Thailand and Laos, and the expansion of these policies towards their neighbors in the region.

The Municipal Office of Ubonratchathani in Thailand was chosen as one public agency to give an interview because Ubonratchthani was the province with the highest amount⁵⁸ of Thai travelers coming to destinations in southern Laos by crossing the border checkpoint called Chong Mek. The mayor of Ubonratchathani assigned head of the department of strategic planning as a representative of Municipal Office to give an interview. The head of department proposed the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) and has taken EWEC as a matter of concern to tourism. EWEC is the road connecting Mawlamyine in Myanmar and Da Nang in Vietnam.

"... EWEC is a new route from Vietnam to Myanmar and lots of people expect economic development and growth to Ubonratchathani (...). There was the policy for a group of four provinces which proposed Ubonratchathani as a gateway to Laos, and attracted visitors who previous traveled on the Khmer route from Nakhonratchasima (...). One major concern of us is the problem at Chong Mek boundary area ... how to manage, control, or keep an eye on the public area used..." (Interview 3).

The head of department, suggested that the new project of EWEC would bring big changes to provinces in lower northeastern Thailand (lower I-san) in the dimensions of economics and growth in business. The Municipal Office considered Ubonratchathani as a logistics unit to distribute goods to and from Chong Mek. There have been good trade activities around Chong Mek boundary area. Therefore, any changes in infrastructure development will be expected to affect directly to business at the border. In the tourism dimension, as there was a policy for a group of four provinces in lower northeastern Thailand that are Ubonratchathani, Nakhonratchsima, Surin and Sri Saket which proposed Ubonratchathani as a gateway to southern Laos. From this policy, while Nakhonratchsima, Surin and Sri Saket were on the Khmer-route tour program , when included Ubonratchathani being a gateway to Laos, it was expected to attract more visitors from these three provinces visit Ubonratchathani and further crossing the border and traveling to southern Laos. About the Khmer-route tour, there was a study⁵⁹ reported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) on the route of Khmer civilization in lower I-san in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. The result of the study suggested the classification of a pro-

⁵⁸ Phiboon Mangsahan Immigration Control 2008.

⁵⁹ http://www.trf.or.th/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=825:2012-01-04-06-52-56&catid=52:2011-03-29-09-42-14&Itemid=166 (accessed on 19.11.2013).

gram to travel following the path of the ancient Khmer empire. With this route, transnational tourism could be promoted and could make it possible. It was expected to benefit and gain advantages in the future.

However, the Municipal Office had concerned on management and control of area used at boundary. The area at Chong Mek has become problem of how to organized and control the public area used as there have been expanded more and more. In the future, the Ubonratchathani Municipal Office expects more cooperation between Thailand and Laos, for example, in terms of condition, rules, or even a treaty.

From the Laos side, an interview with a management staff from the Lao National Tourism Administration in Vientiane suggested that the country has natural resources, ways of life and unique cultures as a strong point to attract traveler all over the world. The new roads improvement provided more conveniences to travel and shortened time to destinations and attractions.

"... Tourism in Laos continues to grow, we expect more tourists in the future as we have natural resources, unique cultures and a way of life that still attracts people from all over the world. (...) In the past, traveling from Savannakhet to Lao Bao took you about six hours, with the new road now you take only two hours ..." (Interview 5).

For the southern Laos region, on the future perspective of tourism, most stakeholders and LNTA agreed that this region has the potential to continue growing as a result of improvements in transport connections. LNTA tourism personnel in Vientiane expected that the number of visitors in Laos in the future will skyrocket and is confident that Laos still has more tourism resources to be explored for worldwide tourists⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ From interviews with LNTA personnel.

9 Conclusion: Transnational tourism after the opening of the borders, bringing together the tourists demand and the regions supply

The empirical study shows that in both regions there has been development and changes in the perceptions, differences, and behavior between the two tourist groups. The following summary of this dissertation will emphasize the substance of this study.

9.1 The beginning and the process of transnationalization

Both northeastern Thailand (I-san) and southern Laos shared certain characteristics, these two areas were mostly isolated from any activities in tourism. They had experienced less growth of income generated from the tourism sector. This study first *observed and showed the differences in the development of tourism, in both regions, from the past to present.*

During the time of the Cold War (1945-1989), the situation of economic remoteness in Thailand was heightened and the northeast became a “dead end street” in terms of infrastructure, transportation and economic development. The uneven development within the country was also reflected in the tourism development of the I-san region, one of the most remote and poor areas of the country. Even though tourism had become a major sector of the Thai economy since the late 1960’s, not every part of the country was included in the booming tourism activities. Tourism in Thailand had been concentrated in three major destinations, in particular; Chiang Mai in the north, Bangkok in the center, and Phuket in the south. Although tourism boundaries have been extended and new destinations have been explored by travelers, the expansion has not changed the popularity of these three major spots.

In communist Laos during the same period, the political situation was the reason behind limited cooperation with other countries. There were few tourists traveling to Laos and only a few places in Laos could be described as tourist attractions. Transportation and infrastructure within the country were not in good condition that made accessibility to such areas difficult. One example is Vang Viang, a small town north of the capital Vientiane, which has nowadays become a famous destination for tourists, as a backpacker-

oriented town. The district Vang Viang attracted few visitors until 1994; those visitors were mainly returnees visiting their families in Laos and a few international tourists.

In the early 1950's, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were drawn into the circumstance of the Vietnam War. During the 1960's, the Vietnam War resulted in a significant number of U.S. military personnel in Thailand, increasing day by day. The presence of the U.S. military was linked to the biggest boost to tourism development in Thailand as the country became a popular destination for leisure leave for the soldiers. For Laos, in 1975 the Lao People's Democratic Republic was proclaimed, followed by a period of communist rule which was linked to a 'sealed off' policy. Then, in 1986, a new Economic Management Mechanism was introduced. This newly regained stability could be considered as one precondition leading to the emergence of transnational tourism in the region. The important reforms of 1986, moving towards a market-based economy, led to an 'open door' policy and tourism has been raised in importance since then. International tourism began when Laos opened the country to international tourists in 1989.

After the Cold War, the political changes in Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam led to a process of rapprochement. The situation resulting from this relationship brought about the opening of the borders between Thailand and neighboring communist countries. The open-borders development within Southeast Asian countries had a significant impact on Laos which was now connected to international road networks and this turned Laos into a 'land-linked' country. Similarly, the impact of this could also be observed in northeastern Thailand. The major important development, for tourism in northeastern Thailand and Laos, has been the opening of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridges which became the gateways between the two countries.

Beyond the permission that officially allowed travelers to cross the borders between the countries, the development of the road network was also important for transnational tourism to be made possible. The improvements to infrastructure over recent years, has led to new possibilities for transnational tourism. The situation regarding remoteness has been changed significantly due to the new transnational traveling phenomenon in the two focus areas of I-san and southern Laos.

9.2 The demand and supply from the pioneers to mass tourism

In the early period, there were two main groups of tourists in Southeast Asia, sometimes following a development over several stages. In Laos, the “pioneers” were the backpackers, individual young tourists from western countries and Australia, followed by middle class tourists from Europe and the United States. The backpackers were looking for another unspoiled destination that had not yet succumbed to mass tourism, as in Thailand. The form of traveling was either as an individual or sometimes in a tour group. Besides, the western backpackers, there was also another group with a significantly different behavior and different expectations who were Asian tourists from countries such as Thailand and China. As a large number of the visitors were Thai, the empirical work then compared international, mostly western, tourists to the Thai tourists, in order to understand the aims, expectations and behavior of these two groups and clarified *how the main visitor groups differ within the study area, and what were the differences in perceptions, expectations and demands of Thai and western tourists.*

The findings showed significantly different patterns and travel behavior between the two groups, pointing out the different cultural status and backgrounds of the two different groups of visitors making their trips to Laos.

As to personal backgrounds, the typical Thai tourists were middle aged persons with a high status in their society, who traveled to Laos as a matter of status, incentive or reward from within their workplaces or organizations, and were significantly older than the international tourists. In contrast, the international tourists were young and unaffiliated, traveling to Southeast Asian in search of adventure activities. However, the study clearly showed that the Thai tourists who were interviewed were not a representative sample of Thai society, but were a very well educated group with high status. In contrast, the majority of international tourists were; young, educated backpackers, university students or they had finished high schools and were spending time traveling before continuing into further education and jobs.

For the perception and behavior of the two groups, the information on conditions, opportunities for traveling and touristic offers were necessary for making the decision on whether or not to travel to each destinations. Therefore, information was at the center of the tourist’s behavior. The study showed that the most important sources of information for Thai tourists was friends and relatives, at a significantly higher level than for the in-

ternational tourists who were asked the same question about the source of their travel information. Conversations with friends, regarding trips to Laos, among Thais may have been much more frequent than among visitors from the other countries. This could reflect the personal context of this information, with moods and feelings about people, landscape and personal highlights taken into consideration as well. However, verbal information was not the only key source to illustrate destinations in Laos. The most important source of information for international tourists was guide books with this result being typical amongst backpackers. Lonely Planet was the most dominant guide book among this group, followed by Guide du Routard. However, multiple sources of information were not the only difference in behavior between these two groups. Thais usually chose organized travel tours and considered it as a reward in line with their social status, while international tourists searched for information which provided them with more flexibility for their journey.

Tour operators seem to be the middle segment between tourists at their origin country and the destination regions, bringing tourism to the mass and the mass to the tourist destinations. The volume of purchased tourism products is reflected in the price of the packaged tours, making them lower or higher in cost will have a significant effect on the travel market.

In summary, the results for the two groups, on the demand side, showed that the Thais paid little attention to cultural differences and they were not deeply interested in attractions, though they requested more details about the tour programs. The western tourists were more likely to show an interest in seeing and understanding the differences in cultures and exploring destinations, in-depth. In terms of the supply side, arrangements for Thai groups could be flexible but with cost conditions. For example, any extra request made during the trip would be possible but be charged at an extra cost to the customers if they wished to accept. To tailor the program for Thai tourists, the operators or agencies first offer economy class with lower prices on the condition that more comfortable accommodation could be requested at extra cost.

For international tourists, the German tourists considered the quality of tourism products to be more of a priority than other Europeans. The lower price offered might come with questions such as would it be possible to get a good tourism product at a reasonable price. Moreover, agreement documents were of the most importance; based on the trust that should unpredictable problems arise, they would keep to and be protected

under the agreement. They also appreciated the chance to learn and try another, optional tour activities (for example elephant tours with riding, rafting, etc.) even though these would be charged at extra costs. Other western tourists, for example those from the Netherlands and Italy were not likely to pay more. To arrange tour offers for tourists from the Netherlands and other places, operators tend to prepare an “all-inclusive” price as a simple selling incentive. While for the French tourists, they enjoy shopping more than the others so the program should provide some time to serve these groups, for example.

However, to achieve a balance in tourist demand and regional supply, a broader approach must be applied and it must ensure that both the tourist side and the supply side could be satisfactorily served and share the benefits from each other, including sustaining the tourism sector of each region.

9.3 The consequences and prospects

Presently, many areas have become very popular tourist attractions for international as well as domestic tourists. However, the growth in popularity of new destinations has also brought about impacts and problems. At first, the management of this growth in mass tourism became a problem. The core problem was not in the lack of planning but with the insufficiency of implementation. The lack of coordination between private and public stakeholders and concerned agencies led to unplanned developments within the tourism sector. For example, the private sector in particular took advantage of this and started taking over public areas and indulged in illegal and excessive building without concern for environmental protection, public health and city planning. One significant example of this type of development was, as stated by the former TAT-governor in 2005, the negative impacts of tourism on the beach resort of Pattaya, which was transformed from a sleepy fishing village into an R & R destination for American soldiers during the Vietnam War. The lack of clear planning, management and coordination between the authorities, combined with illegal land use, led to uncontrolled mass tourism which caused the deterioration of the former beautiful resort. Another paradox lies in the fact that both tourism and the environment are directly connected to each other and that tourism relies on there being a pleasant environment. The negative impact on its core resources such as the beauty of the countryside and landscape, affects directly the most attractive sites, such as beaches, lakes, riversides, mountainous lands and slopes. Quite

often these sites, which are very attractive for tourism, were areas with a high biodiversity and rich ecosystems. This tourism-linked degradation is a common phenomenon in Southeast Asia.

When reflecting on the development of mass tourism, for example in Thailand, it is important to have a clear policy related to management, conservation and preservation, that balances supply and demand with concerns regarding the carrying capacity of the tourism destinations, improvement of service standards and appropriate security, human resources for a tourism sector that has accumulated problems over the years. Recent changes in tourism have been impacted and characterized by globalisation. The changes have impacts on people, social and economic structure, organizations and institutions.

At regional level, the 14th ASEAN Summit, in 2009 saw ASEAN countries agree on the importance of travel and tourism within the region (Intra-ASEAN travel and tourism) in order to stimulate the economic growth of the countries in the region. Guidelines for the promotion of tourism development within ASEAN included linking the ASEAN tourism routes, creating incentives for investors and a network of tourism cooperation with China, Japan, Korea, Russia and India. However, focusing on tourism between ASEAN member countries and the country network, the providing of visa exemption to ASEAN tourists and an agreement for a single visa for tourists from third-party countries are the important issues. To promote tourism routes linked in the ASEAN group (ASEAN Tourism Corridors Connectivity) there must be consistency with the policies to make travel path links at provincial level. By this, each ASEAN country will make travel path links between each other in order to promote travel within the region (Intra-ASEAN Travel and Tourism).

Lastly, tourism development can serve as an opportunity and economic factors play a major role in each destination. As has been indicated, transnational tourism is an opportunity of economic interest and also a challenge for the broader community.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire on Tourism in Southern Laos (English)



University of Heidelberg – Germany
Department of Geography
Prof. Dr. H. Gebhardt
Homepage: http://www.geog.uni-heidelberg.de/

Questionnaire on Tourism in Southern Laos
Your answers will be kept strictly anonymous.

No.....Date.....Place.....Interviewer.....

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- 1. Nationality :
2. Country of residences
3. Agesyears
4. Gender [] Male [] Female
5. Education [] High School [] Bachelor [] Master [] Ph.D. [] Apprenticeship [] Other
6. Occupation [] Student [] Business [] Employee [] Retired [] Other.....
7. Monthly income\$US / month

TOURISM INFORMATION

- 1. How long are you traveling altogether during this trip? days
2. How long have you been in Southeast-Asia? days
3. How long do you plan to stay in Lao? days
4. Is this your first trip to Lao? [] yes [] No, it's my time
5. Your travel route
6. What means of transportation you use most while travelling in Laos?
7. Who are you travelling with ? [] Individual / Backpacker [] Group tour. Tour operator:..... [] Other.....
8. How much money do you spend in Laos per day?\$US (per day)
9. What do you spend most of your money on? Accommodation.....% Transportation.....% Shopping.....% Food & Beverage.....% Other.....%

10. Why did you decide to travel to Laos?

11. What is your most interesting? (sequence by 1-5, 1= first priority.... and 5= last priority)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature, Wildlife, Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural sightseeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly people | <input type="checkbox"/> Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Sport activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Atmosphere | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable Cost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other..... | | |

12. Would you like to come back again? Yes No

Because.....

13. Source of tourist information ? website newspaper travel guidebook

Friends or relatives Travel agents Other.....

Which travel guidebookyear:.....

14. What kind of accommodation do you prefer?

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel | <input type="checkbox"/> Resort | <input type="checkbox"/> Guesthouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private house <input type="checkbox"/> Other..... | | |

15. Your opinion on :

Tourism components	Excellence	Good	Fair	Poor
Accessibility to attractions				
Transportation between the cities				
Road or highway condition				
Means of transportation				
Tourist information centre				
Travel agency				
Public services (internet, hospital, money exchange, etc.)				
Tourist safety and security				
Accommodation				
Accommodation Price				
Food and beverage				
Food and beverage Price				
Overall Expenditure				
Entertainment				
Cultural / Historical activities				
Spa and Health Tourism				
Sport activities				
Souvenir and Gift shop				
Attraction Sites				
Facilities on attraction sites				
People friendly				
Entry Visa				

Tourism Destiantions	Excellence	Good	Fair	Poor
Pak Se				
Bolaven Plateau				
the town of Champasak				
Wat Phou				
Si Phan Don				
Li Phi Falls				
Ban Saphai and Don Kho				
Khon Phapheng Falls				
Kiat Ngong				
Phou Asa				
Pak Xong				
Dong Hau Sao NBCA				
Tad Lo				
Tad Fan				
Tad Hang				
Elephants Treks				
Salavan				
Wat Phon Kaew				
Xe Pian NBCA				
Xe Kong				
Attapu				
Other (please specify).....				
.....				
.....				

15. Where is your most favourite destination in Southern Laos ?

.....

SUGGESTION

Accommodation.....

.....

Food and Beverage.....

.....

Transportation.....

.....

Destinations.....

.....

Others.....

.....

.....

Thank you very much for your help Have a nice trip.

Appendix B: Questionnaire on Tourism in Southern Laos (Thai)



University of Heidelberg – Germany

Department of Geography

Prof. Dr. H. Gebhardt

Homepage: <http://www.geog.uni-heidelberg.de/>

Questionnaire on Tourism in Southern Laos

No.....Date.....Place.....Interviewer.....

เรียน ท่านผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

เนื่องจากข้าพเจ้า น.ส. วรางคณา ถาวรวิริยตระกูล กำลังศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอก ณ มหาวิทยาลัยไฮเดลเบิร์ก ประเทศสหพันธ์สาธารณรัฐเยอรมนี ขณะนี้อยู่ระหว่างเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเพื่อทำวิทยานิพนธ์เรื่อง "Transnational tourism after the opening of the borders" กรณีศึกษาประเทศไทย และสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว

จึงใคร่ขอความกรุณาจากท่านในการแสดงความคิดเห็นตามความเป็นจริง

ข้อมูลนี้จะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับเพื่อประกอบการศึกษาเท่านั้น

ขอขอบพระคุณทุกท่านเป็นอย่างสูงมา ณ โอกาสนี้

.....
(วรางคณา ถาวรวิริยตระกูล)

ตอนที่ 1 : ข้อมูลส่วนบุคคล

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงใน ()

หรือเติมข้อความในช่องว่างตามความคิดเห็นของท่าน

1. เพศ
() 1. ชาย () 2. หญิง
2. อายุ
() 1. น้อยกว่า 20 ปี () 2. 20-29 ปี
() 3. 30-39 ปี () 4. 40-49 ปี
() 5. 50 ปี ขึ้นไป
3. ระดับการศึกษา
() 1. ต่ำกว่าปริญญาตรี () 2. ปริญญาตรี
() 3. ปริญญาโท () 4. สูงกว่าปริญญาโท
4. อาชีพ
() 1. ราชการ / รัฐวิสาหกิจ () 2. พนักงานบริษัทเอกชน
() 3. ธุรกิจส่วนตัว () 4. นักเรียน / นักศึกษา
() 5. อื่น ๆ โปรดระบุ.....
5. สถานภาพ
() 1. โสด () 2. สมรส
() 3. มีภรรยา () 4. อื่นๆ
6. รายได้ต่อเดือน
() 1. ต่ำกว่าหรือเท่ากับ 15,000 บาท
() 2. 15,001- 25,000 บาท
() 3. 25,001 - 35,000 บาท
() 4. 35,001 – 45,000 บาท
() 5. มากกว่า 45,000 บาท
7. สัญชาติ : ที่อยู่ปัจจุบัน : ประเทศ

ตอนที่ 2 : การเดินทางท่องเที่ยว

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงในช่องที่ตรงกับความเป็นจริงมากที่สุด

1. โปรดระบุวัตถุประสงค์ในการเดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวในครั้งนี้
 1. เพื่อการพักผ่อน 2. การติดต่อธุรกิจ
 3. เพื่อเยี่ยมญาติ ครอบครัว หรือเพื่อนฝูง
 4. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....
 2. ท่านเดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวที่ สปป. ลาว เป็นครั้งที่
 3. ท่านทราบสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวใน สปป. ลาว จากสื่อ หรือช่องทางใด (ตอบได้หลายข้อ)
 1. สื่อสิ่งพิมพ์ 2. วิทยุ 3. โทรทัศน์
 4. เพื่อน หรือ ญาติสนิท 5. เว็บไซต์
 6. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....
 4. ท่านจะพักอยู่ใน สปป. ลาว เป็นระยะเวลาเท่าใด วัน
 5. ท่านเริ่มต้นเดินทางจากจังหวัด
- โดย (รถโดยสาร เครื่องบิน รถส่วนตัว ฯลฯ)
- ท่านได้ไปท่องเที่ยวที่ใดบ้าง (โปรดระบุ)
-
- และ ท่านตั้งใจจะไปยังแหล่งท่องเที่ยวใดต่อไป (โปรดระบุ)
-
6. ลักษณะการเดินทางของท่านมายัง สปป. ลาว อย่างไร
 1. เดินทางกับคณะทัวร์ 2. เดินทางส่วนตัว
 3. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ)
 7. ในการเดินทางครั้งนี้ใครเป็นเพื่อนร่วมเดินทางของท่าน
 1. เดินทางตามลำพัง
 2. คู่สมรส / สมาชิกในครอบครัว / ญาติ
 3. เพื่อน
 4. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ)
 8. โปรดระบุยานพาหนะหลักที่ท่านใช้ในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวใน สปป. ลาว
 1. รถยนต์ตัว 2. รถนำเที่ยว 3. เครื่องบิน
 4. เรือนำเที่ยว 5. รถยนต์เช่า 6. รถโดยสารประจำทาง
 7. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....
 9. ท่านมีค่าใช้จ่ายในการท่องเที่ยวใน สปป. ลาว ตลอดการเดินทาง
 ประมาณ บาท
 ค่าที่พัก% ค่าอาหารเครื่องดื่ม.....%
 ค่าเดินทาง.....% ข้อปิ้ง.....%
 อื่นๆ%

10. ท่านตัดสินใจเลือกมาท่องเที่ยวที่ สปป.ลาว เพราะเหตุใด
- () 1. แหล่งท่องเที่ยวธรรมชาติ () 2. ประวัติศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรม
 () 3. กิจกรรมผจญภัย () 4. ช็อปปิ้ง
 () 5. ความเป็นมิตรของประชาชน () 6. สภาพภูมิประเทศ บรรยากาศ
 () 7. ค่าใช้จ่ายเหมาะสม
 () 8. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....

11. ท่านเดินทางท่องเที่ยวใน สปป.ลาว ท่านชอบที่พักในรูปแบบใด
- () 1. โรงแรม () 2. รีสอร์ท
 () 3. เกสต์เฮาส์ () 4. บ้านพักส่วนตัว
 () 5. อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....

12. ความพึงพอใจของท่าน

หัวข้อ	ระดับความพึงพอใจ			
	มากที่สุด	มาก	ปานกลาง	น้อย
1. การเดินทาง				
1. จำนวนความถี่ของรถโดยสารประจำทาง				
2. ความสะดวกในการเดินทางเข้าถึงแหล่งท่องเที่ยว				
3. สภาพการคมนาคม เช่น ถนน				
4. ความหลากหลายของยานพาหนะที่ให้บริการ				
2. แหล่งท่องเที่ยว				
1. ความน่าสนใจของแหล่งท่องเที่ยว				
2. สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกภายในแหล่งท่องเที่ยว				
3. ความเป็นมิตรของผู้คนในท้องถิ่น				
4. ความปลอดภัยในแหล่งท่องเที่ยว				
3. ที่พัก และ อาหาร				
1. ประเภทของที่พักมีความหลากหลาย				
2. ราคาที่พัก				
3. ราคาอาหารและเครื่องดื่ม				
4. ค่าใช้จ่ายโดยรวมตลอดการเดินทาง				
4. กิจกรรม				
1. ความหลากหลาย และความน่าสนใจของกิจกรรมการท่องเที่ยว				
2. สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกในการจัดกิจกรรม เช่น สถานที่ อุปกรณ์				
3. อัตราค่าบริการของแต่ละกิจกรรม				
4. ความปลอดภัย				
5. สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกทางการท่องเที่ยว				
1. ความหลากหลายของร้านอาหาร ร้านค้า และร้านขายสินค้าที่ระลึก				
2. ศูนย์บริการนักท่องเที่ยว				
3. สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกด้านอื่นๆ เช่น รถพยาบาล ธนาคาร ฯลฯ				

แหล่งท่องเที่ยว	ระดับความพึงพอใจ			
	มากที่สุด	มาก	ปานกลาง	น้อย
ปากเซ				
ที่ราบ Bolaven				
เมืองจำปาสัก				
วัดพู				
สี่พันดอน				
น้ำตกสี่ผี				
บ้านสะพาย , ดอนโค				
น้ำตกคอนพะเพ็ง				
บ้านเขียดโจ้ง				
ภูาสส				
ปากซอ				
อุทยานดงหัวเสา				
ดาดเลาะ				
ดาดฟาน				
ดาดฮ้าง				
นั่งช้างเส้นทางเดินป่า				
สาละวัน				
วัดโพนแก้ว				
อุทยานเขเบี่ยน				
เขากอง				
อัคระปือ				
อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....				
.....				
.....				

13. ท่านชอบแหล่งท่องเที่ยวใดมากที่สุด ในการเดินทางครั้งนี้

.....

14. ท่านคิดว่าจะเดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวยังแหล่งท่องเที่ยวเดิมอีกครั้ง หรือไม่

- () 1. เดินทางกลับมาแน่นอน () 2. ไม่แน่ใจ
 () 3. ไม่กลับมาแน่นอน

โปรดระบุเหตุผล

ตอนที่ 3 : ความคิดเห็นและข้อเสนอแนะอื่น ๆ

.....

ด้วยความขอบพระคุณเป็นอย่างยิ่ง

Appendix C: Questionnaire on the Potentials for Tourism in Northeast-Thailand



University of Heidelberg – Germany

Department of Geography

Prof. Dr. H. Gebhardt

Homepage: <http://www.geog.uni-heidelberg.de/>

Questionnaire on the Potentials for Tourism in Northeast-Thailand

Your answers will be kept strictly anonymous!

1. How long are you traveling altogether during this holiday? _____ days

How long have you been in Southeast-Asia up to now? _____ days

How long do you plan to stay in this region (Isan)? _____ days

Is this your first trip to Isan? yes No, it's my _____ time2. Why did you decide to go to Isan? (please check off:) information or recommendation in my travel guidebook,

Which travel guidebook _____, year: _____

 recommendation of other travelers other reasons, namely _____

3. Way of traveling in Isan (Multiple Responses are possible)

 organized group tour operator: _____ individual tour (e.g. backpacker) others, namely _____

4. What kind of accommodation do you prefer?

 hotel: First class: _____ Middle class: _____ Budget: _____ Resort Guesthouse Private house Other:

5. What are your main activities in Isan ? (Please name the three most important ones)

 visiting archeological/historical sites getting to know local culture and people personal experience adventure nature mainly transit visiting friends or relatives doing nothing, relaxing others, namely _____

6. What do you think about the following attractions?

Attraction	Have heard or read about it?	Are you planning to go there?	Have you been there?	How did you like it? 1= very attractive 2=attractive 3=not very attractive 4=not attractive at all	From where did you receive your information about this place/attraction? a) guide book (if yes which one) b) local people c) other travellers d) internet or other media e) others
Channabot silk village					
Phimai temple					
Sahas sakhon dinosaur area					

National park Name:					
Indo-china market in Nong Khai					
Ban Chiang					

Attractions	Which type of transportation do/did you use in order to reach the sight?	Suggestions for improvements? (erst offen fragen!) a) transportation system, traffic signs b) language; bilingual information c) others d) none
Channabot silk village		
Phimai temple		
Sahas sakhon dinosaur area		
National park		
Indo-china market in Nong Khai		
Ban Chiang		

7 What would you recommend to other tourists?

I.) _____

II.) _____

III.) _____

8. What are the 3 attributes which characterize Isan best?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Frage 9 und 10: Bei Touristen, die bereits im Isan waren, wird nach Erfahrungen gefragt. Bei Touristen, die noch nicht den Isan bereist haben, wird nach Erwartungen an den Isan gefragt.

9. To what extend do you agree with the following attributes?

a) Isan people are:

	😊😊	😊	Neither, nor	😊	😊😊	
Friendly						Unfriendly
Traditional						Modern
Poor						Rich
Happy						Unhappy
Honest						Dishonest
Open						Reserved
Relaxed						Stressed

b) Daily culture of Isan is:

	😊😊	😊	Neither, nor	😊	😊😊	
Original						Touristy
Colourful						Dull
Interesting						Boring
Different from other regions of Thailand						Similar to other regions of Thailand

10. *Nur fuer Touristen, die den Isan bereist haben.* Comparing your experiences in Isan to your expectations in advance?

a) What do you consider now better than expected?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

b) What do you consider now worse than expected?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

11. Which of the following pictures do characterize Isan best?

Think about a guided adventure hike through a tropical forest.

Would you like to do this in general? Yes No

How important would it be for you to have:

😊😊😊 = very important 😊 = less important

	😊😊😊	😊😊	😊	not important
Open air overnight stay in the woods				
Explanation about flora and fauna				
Hunting				
Collecting food/fishing				
First aid rescue simulation				
Gotcha Games				
Others:				

Imagine there was a possibility for a home stay in a Thai family.

Could you imagine staying with them for a while? Yes No

How important would it be for you to:

😊😊😊 = very important 😊 = less important

	😊😊😊	😊😊	😊	not important
Go to a market with local people				
Cook and eat with them				
Planting and harvesting rice				
See traditional handcraft				
Get background information about religious and local ceremonies				
Learn some Thai phrases				
Others:				

How interested are you in:

😊😊😊 = very interested 😊 = less interested

	😊😊😊	😊😊	😊	not interested
Visiting local villages				
Visiting farms (rubber, melon, flowers)				
Visiting archaeological sites (dinosaur parks, early human settlements)				
Visiting geological, landscapes (caves, rock formations, waterfalls)				
Visiting Buddhist Temples				
Camping				
Swimming in a natural spring/source				
Mountain biking				
Others:				

Could you imagine combining some of these activities within a guided mountain bike tour?

Yes No

Imagine you are in Khon Kaen or in another city of Isan.

How interested are you in:

😊😊😊 = very interested 😊 = less interested

	😊😊😊	😊😊	😊	not interested
A guided city sight seeing tour				
Visiting a night market				

Having a Thai massage				
Modern Thai night life (disco)				
Visiting a school or University (Educational System)				
Meeting national NGOs and getting information about the local development programs				
Shopping				
Relaxing				
Language Course				
Cooking Classes				
Others:				

Have you got any other fancy ideas?

Sex: male female (don't ask – fill in)

Nationality:

Age: up to 20 years 31-40 years 51-60 years
 21-30 years 41-50 years over 60 years

Highest degree of Education: Elementary School Secondary School A-levels/Baccalaureate
 University Vocational Other:

How much money do you spend per day?
 up to 500 Baht 501 to 1000 Baht 1001 to 2000 Baht more than 2000 Baht

What do you spend most of your money on?

Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix D: Questionnaire on Tourism in Southern Laos



University of Heidelberg – Germany
Department of Geography

<http://www.geog.uni-heidelberg.de/>

แบบสัมภาษณ์หน่วยงานภาครัฐ

เรียน ท่านผู้ตอบแบบสัมภาษณ์

เนื่องจากข้าพเจ้า ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ วรางคณา ถาวรวิริยตระกูล กำลังศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอก ณ มหาวิทยาลัยไฮเดลแบร์ก ประเทศสหพันธ์สาธารณรัฐเยอรมนี ขณะนี้อยู่ระหว่างเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเพื่อทำวิทยานิพนธ์เรื่อง “Transnational tourism after the opening of the borders” กรณีศึกษาประเทศไทย และสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว

จึงใคร่ขอความกรุณาจากท่านในการแสดงความคิดเห็นตามความเป็นจริง
ข้อมูลนี้จะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับเพื่อประกอบการศึกษาเท่านั้น
ขอขอบพระคุณเป็นอย่างสูงมา ณ โอกาสนี้

.....
(วรางคณา ถาวรวิริยตระกูล)

ส่วนที่ 1 : ข้อมูลหน่วยงาน

ชื่อหน่วยงาน.....

ที่อยู่.....

.....

เบอร์โทรศัพท์.....เบอร์โทรสาร.....

ชื่อผู้ให้การสัมภาษณ์.....

ตำแหน่ง.....

1. หน่วยงานของท่านมีบทบาท/หน้าที่และเกี่ยวข้องกับภารกิจท่องเที่ยวอย่างไรบ้าง

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2. หน่วยงานของท่านมีนโยบาย แผนยุทธศาสตร์ทางการท่องเที่ยว อย่างไรบ้าง
- (1) ด้านสาธารณูปโภค สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกต่างๆ ความเป็นระเบียบเรียบร้อย
 - การคมนาคมขนส่ง
 - โทรคมนาคม
 - ความปลอดภัย
 - ด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม
 - ข้อมูลข่าวสารและการประชาสัมพันธ์การท่องเที่ยว
 - ด้านอื่นๆ
 - (2) ด้านการบริหาร(การวางแผน การดำเนินการ งบประมาณ การติดตามและประเมินผล) และการประสานงาน(ระหว่างหน่วยงานและระหว่างภาครัฐ ภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน)
 - (3) ด้านการพัฒนาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
 - (4) บุคลากรทางการท่องเที่ยว
 - (5) ด้านการตลาดการท่องเที่ยว
 - (6) ด้านการมีส่วนร่วมระหว่างภาครัฐกับภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน
 - (7) ด้านเศรษฐกิจและรายได้จากการท่องเที่ยว
 - (8) ด้านสังคม
 - (9) ด้านประเพณี ศิลปวัฒนธรรม
 - (10) ด้านอื่นๆ

ส่วนที่ 2 : สถานการณ์การท่องเที่ยว ก่อน และ หลัง การเปิดด่านพรมแดน

1. หน่วยงานของท่านได้ดำเนินการอันเป็นการส่งเสริม/สนับสนุน/ปรับปรุง/แก้ไขในด้านต่างๆ อย่างไรบ้าง
 - (1) สาธารณูปโภค สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกต่างๆ ความเป็นระเบียบเรียบร้อย
 - (2) การบริหาร(การวางแผน งบประมาณ การดำเนินการ การติดตามและประเมินผล) และการประสานงาน(ระหว่างหน่วยงานและระหว่างภาครัฐ ภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน)
 - (3) การพัฒนาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
 - (4) บุคลากรทางการท่องเที่ยว
 - (5) การการพัฒนาท่องเที่ยวแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
 - (6) การตลาดการท่องเที่ยว
 - (7) การมีส่วนร่วมระหว่างภาครัฐกับภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน
 - (8) เศรษฐกิจและรายได้จากการท่องเที่ยว
 - (9) สังคม
 - (10) สิ่งแวดล้อม
 - (11) ประเพณีศิลปวัฒนธรรม
 - (12) อื่นๆ

2. หน่วยงานของท่านมี **ปัญหา** ด้านการส่งเสริมและพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวด้านต่างๆอย่างไรบ้าง

- (1) สาธารณูปโภค สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกต่างๆ ความเป็นระเบียบเรียบร้อย
- (2) การบริหาร(การวางแผน งบประมาณ การดำเนินการ การติดตามและประเมินผล) และการประสานงาน(ระหว่างหน่วยงานและระหว่างภาครัฐ ภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน)
- (3) การพัฒนาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
- (4) บุคลากรทางการท่องเที่ยว
- (5) การการพัฒนาท่องเที่ยวแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
- (6) การตลาดการท่องเที่ยว
- (7) การมีส่วนร่วมระหว่างภาครัฐกับภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน
- (8) เศรษฐกิจและรายได้จากการท่องเที่ยว
- (9) สังคม
- (10) สิ่งแวดล้อม
- (11) ประเพณีศิลปวัฒนธรรม
- (12) อื่นๆ

3. หน่วยงานของท่านมีแนวทางในการส่งเสริมและพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวใน **อนาคต** ในด้านต่างๆ อย่างไรบ้าง
- (1) สาธารณูปโภค สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกต่างๆ ความเป็นระเบียบเรียบร้อย
 - (2) การบริหาร(การวางแผน งบประมาณ การดำเนินการ การติดตามและประเมินผล) และการประสานงาน(ระหว่างหน่วยงานและระหว่างภาครัฐ ภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน)
 - (3) การพัฒนาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
 - (4) บุคลากรทางการท่องเที่ยว
 - (5) การการพัฒนาท่องเที่ยวแหล่งท่องเที่ยว
 - (6) การตลาดการท่องเที่ยว
 - (7) การมีส่วนร่วมระหว่างภาครัฐกับภาคเอกชน และภาคประชาชน
 - (8) เศรษฐกิจและรายได้จากการท่องเที่ยว
 - (9) สังคม
 - (10) สิ่งแวดล้อม
 - (11) ประเพณีศิลปวัฒนธรรม
 - (12) อื่นๆ

Appendix E: Questionnaire on Tourism in Southern Laos 2



University of Heidelberg – Germany
Department of Geography

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**แบบสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก
สำหรับผู้ประกอบการภาคเอกชน**

เรียน ท่านผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

เนื่องจากข้าพเจ้า ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ วรางคณา ถาวรวิริยตระกูล กำลังศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอก ณ มหาวิทยาลัยไฮเดลเบิร์ก ประเทศสหพันธ์สาธารณรัฐเยอรมนี ขณะนี้อยู่ระหว่างเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเพื่อทำวิทยานิพนธ์เรื่อง "Transnational tourism after the opening of the borders" กรณีศึกษาประเทศไทย และสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว จึงใคร่ขอความกรุณาจากท่านในการแสดงความคิดเห็นตามความเป็นจริง ข้อมูลนี้จะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับเพื่อประกอบการศึกษาเท่านั้น ขอขอบพระคุณเป็นอย่างสูงมา ณ โอกาสนี้

.....
(วรางคณา ถาวรวิริยตระกูล)

แบบสัมภาษณ์นี้ จัดทำขึ้นสำหรับ ผู้จัดการ หรือผู้บริหารของสถานประกอบการ

ส่วนที่ 1 ข้อมูลทั่วไป

ชื่อสถานประกอบการ.....

ที่ตั้ง.....

ประเภทของสถานประกอบการ.....

ในกรณีที่ เป็นบริษัทนำเที่ยว โปรดระบุโปรแกรมนำเที่ยวที่ให้บริการในเส้นทางจังหวัด อุบลราชธานี และสปป. ลาว (รวมถึงกัมพูชา และเวียดนาม)

.....

.....

ลักษณะของการจดทะเบียนสถานประกอบการ

.....

ระยะเวลาที่เปิดดำเนินการ ปี

ผู้ให้การสัมภาษณ์..... ตำแหน่ง.....

กลุ่มลูกค้าหลัก

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ส่วนที่ 5 การประเมินความสำเร็จของธุรกิจ

1. ผลการดำเนินธุรกิจประสบความสำเร็จหรือไม่ อย่างไร (โปรดระบุตัวชี้วัด) และมีสาเหตุจากอะไรบ้าง

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2. ปัญหาที่สำคัญในการดำเนินธุรกิจในปัจจุบัน

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3. แนวทางการแก้ไขปัญหา

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**ส่วนที่ 6 SWOT ในการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวข้ามพรมแดน บริเวณ
ช่องเม็ก จังหวัดอุบลราชธานี และ แขวงทางตอนใต้ของ สปป.ลาว**

จุดอ่อน.....
.....
.....

จุดแข็ง.....
.....
.....

โอกาส.....
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.....
อุปสรรค / ข้อจำกัด.....
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ส่วนที่ 7 แนวโน้มของธุรกิจในอนาคต

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ส่วนที่ 8 ข้อเสนอแนะ
ในการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวข้ามพรมแดน บริเวณช่องเม็ก จังหวัดอุบลราชธานี
และ แขวงทางตอนใต้ของ สปป.ลาว

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*****ขอขอบพระคุณเป็นอย่างสูงในการอนุเคราะห์ข้อมูลในครั้งนี้*****