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Culturally savvy tourists are one of the traveller groups who prefer to stay in the hotels that are able to distinctively provide individual experiences that they cannot find anywhere else. Using heritage buildings as fabric then applying adaptive and re-use concepts as a boutique hotel is one of the alternatives to both serve the demand of this traveller group and preserve the heritage in Thailand simultaneously.

The aim of this dissertation has been to survey and find potential heritage buildings for applying adaptive and re-use concepts, to identify the constraints relating to the legal, financial and cultural factors that militate against such practices of re-cycling, and to find a feasible way and key success factors to run a boutique hotel in heritage buildings under the constraints of cultural, legal, and economic realities in Thailand. The study was based on interviews and survey of selected buildings categorized into three types of heritage hotels : Original Heritage Hotels, Heritage Hotels that apply an adaptive and re-use approach and Nostalgic Heritage Hotels. There are also two additional hybrid categories situated between these categories. The study also provided a discussion on the question of authenticity of the heritage hotel through a case study of Nan Fa hotel vs. Rachamankha hotel – the interrelated categories of ‘Originally built as a hotel’ and ‘Re-use of Historic Building as Fabric’ vs. ‘Nostalgic Heritage Hotel’. The surveys were conducted during September 2009 to May 2012. It was found that to apply adaptive and re-use programs to heritage buildings is not a straightforward approach that can be applied in every case. Rather, an analysis of the economic, social and cultural conditions is an inescapable pre-requisite. There are also financial, legal and time constraints. If we are to find solutions to overcome these, then we may find a way to run a successful boutique hotel business to serve the current trend of tourists who demand to find a place that provides what they see as ‘authentic’ experiences to them. Those types of tourists will not tend to negotiate but are willing to pay a ‘premium’ if the boutique hotel can provide services that are beyond their expectations. Furthermore, a study of the question of ‘authentic’ design to underlie the creation of ‘architectural excellence’ in the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings requires much further commitment in Thailand in the future.

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