Development of Historical and Cultural Tourism Areas for the Competitive Business of U-don Thani Province

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Abstract---Competitive position in business activities is one of the challenges in the current competitive business market. Particularly, competitive position in U-don Thani Province, Thailand is not easy to achieve. To promote competitive business in in U-don Thani Province, this study proposed historical and cultural tourism. The objective of this study is to examine the role of historical and cultural tourism to gain competitive business position. This study used questionnaire for data collection from various business owners in U-don Thani Province, Thailand. Results of the study obtained with the help of Partial Least Square (PLS), a statistical tool to analyze the primary data. It is found that, competitive business position can be attained with the help of historical and cultural tourism activities. The promotion of historical and cultural tourism can enhance the business activities in U-don Thani Province, Thailand.

Keywords---historical tourism, cultural tourism, competitive position, U-don Thani Thailand.

Introduction

In the current business environment, the competition is increasing day by day due to the increase in number of businesses in the market (Shvakov, Dianova, Teplova, Tatarov, & Kurnosov, 2022). In the same market with the increase in number of businesses can decrease the performance of existing businesses. Therefore, the competition is increasing in the business market and in this competition the achievement of competitive business position is one of the major issues. It is not easy for the companies to achieve higher performance in business activities with the help of competitive business position.

Similarly in Thailand the business activities are also growing (Jermsittiparsert, Namdej, & Somjai, 2019) and total number of businesses are increasing significantly. Particularly in various provinces of Thailand the competition among business activities is at a higher level. Most importantly U-don Thani Province of Thailand has competitive business market. In this market it is not easy for the businesses to survive with average business performance. The newly established business (Bruwer et al., 2021; Weidong, Dahai, & Lihua, 2007) always faces tough condition in such competitive business market to gain good position in the market. Survival in the market is based on the competitive advantage for newly established businesses. New businesses must have a competitive edge to compete with existing business activities. Therefore, it is most important in this province of Thailand to enhance competitive business position with the help of various business strategies.

The current study proposed that the promotion of various tourism activities can promote the competitive business position. Most importantly the role of cultural tourism and historical tourism has vital importance in business activities. Tourism is one of the most important industry in Thailand (Lo & Janta, 2021; Wannasuth & Wichasin, 2021) and it is one of the top Industries globally. Therefore, there are several opportunities of tourism in Thailand which can be promoted. All the tourism activities in Thailand have a significant relationship with the business activities. The business activities are mutually linked with the tourism activities as the tourist travel to the several places of the country which is managed with the help of various other industries. In this direction, according to the current study, historical tourism can play a vital importance. Historical tourism is based on the purpose of exploring the heritage as well as history of a specific place. In Thailand, there are several such tourism opportunities for the people. Secondly the cultural tourism is involved in various activities related to the culture and people from different parts of the country along with other countries travel to the specific places to participate in cultural activities like various festivals. All these cultural and historical activities in Thailand can promote several business opportunities. Therefore, this study highlighted that a historical tourism and cultural tourism can promote competitive advantage in business activities. The business activities which involve various services for the tourist related to the historical and cultural tourism can gain a competitive advantage and this competitive advantage may lead to the overall competitive position in the business market.

Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the role of historical tourism and cultural tourism in competitive business position. There are a number of studies in the literature examined historical tourism and cultural tourism (Chaigassem & Tunming, 2019; Tambunan, Sibarani, & Asmara, 2021), these studies have not examined the competitive position of business activity in relation to the historical tourism and cultural tourism along with the important role of competitive advantage, among competitive business activities in Thailand. Finally, this study has a significant importance for business owners in U-don Thani Province of Thailand to promote business activities with help of historical tourism and cultural tourism by attaining a competitive position.

Literature Review
Framework Development

The conceptual framework of the current study is based on two independent variable namely historical tourism and cultural tourism. This framework is also based on a mediating variable namely competitive advantage. Furthermore, this study is based on one dependent variable namely competitive position in business activities. The relationship between historical tourism, cultural tourism, competitive advantage and competitive position is considered by exploring several theoretical gaps. For instance, this study examines the role of historical tourism and cultural tourism in competitive advantage. The effect of historical tourism and cultural tourism is considered on competitive advantage which is really studied in various business activities. Studies are available on tourism activities related to the cultural and historical tourism (Krool, Vdovichen, & Hyshchuk, 2018; Mura & Kajzar, 2019; Zhu, Liu, Wei, Li, & Wang, 2017), however, the effect of historical and cultural tourism to gain competitive advantage in a business is not considered in previous studies. Additionally, this study has a unique dependent variable; competitive business position. The competitive business position is discussed in various studies however it is not considered as dependent variable in number of previous studies. Therefore, this study has several relationships which are unique in relation to the literature as this study examined the historical tourism and cultural tourism in relation to the competitive business position which is really considered in literature. The theoretical framework of the study is highlighted in Figure 1.
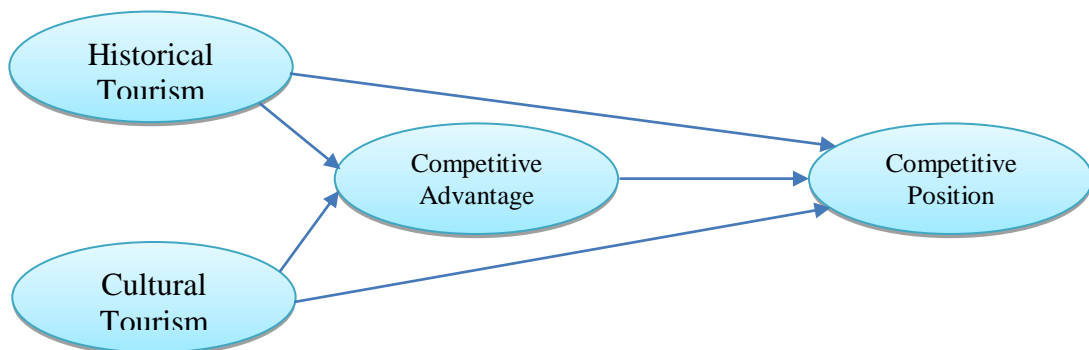

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study showing the relationship between historical tourism, cultural tourism, competitive advantage and competitive position

Hypotheses Development

Historical or heritage tourism means traveling with the main purpose of discovering the history as well as heritage of a place. People often combine their love of history with other tourist delights like shopping, amusement park visits, and luxurious resort stays. Historical tourism and heritage tourism is importance for most of the countries. Generally historical tourism is based on the history and heritage places that are unique and old in various countries always the point of attraction for the people. Along with other countries Thailand is also one of the countries having important historical places (Chairatana, 2021; Chantanee, Chaikham, & Maruekarajtinplaeng, 2021). The historical places in Thailand are the attraction for the tourists which has significant contribution in business. The historical places in any country have very important for the business activity because the historical places are linked with the other business activities in relation to the tourism. The people from various countries traveling to the historical places also use various other facilities such as hotels as well as driving which has effect on the business in a specific area. The historical places in would also include the museums along with the historical homes. It is also based on the eating the local food along with the part of festivals which has a significant importance for the tourists.

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism that permits the tourist to contribute to local cultural activities (Božić, Vujičić, Kennell, Besermenji, & Solarević, 2018; Wongsawat & Deebhijarn, 2019), like festivals as well as rituals. So, communities go out of their way to celebrate and encourage their culture as it makes them dissimilar from other communities. Culture is always a unique element of any society and nation. Culture represents the nation's different traditions, values and norms. Culture is always remaining the intention or part of attraction for the people from different nations and different countries. People always travel from one place to another place to see the culture of the people and the unique culture always represent the nation. Similarly, Thailand also has a unique culture and the society. In Thailand, business related important elements to the culture always made the point of intention for tourist. The cultural tourism for the tourist to participate in different cultural activities and various festivals is important. The cultural tourism has major importance because it helps to reinforce identities and enhance cross-cultural understanding among the nations. Generally, it is made up of tradition, religion, rituals, customs, language, landscaping and dress which always represent the people. Therefore, in Thailand, culture has unique importance which is most important for the tourists and which has the ability to promote tourism industry.

Competitive advantage denotes to factors that permit a business to produce goods as well as services well or more economical than its rivals (Elrehail et al., 2019; KHRISTIANTO, SUHARYONO, PANGESTUTI, & MAWARDI, 2021; Nashiruddin & Susanti, 2021). These factors permit the productive entity to produce more sales or greater margins compared to its market competitors. Competitive advantage is one of the most significant elements of business which has significant contribution to the business success and the survival of business in a competitive market is based on competitive advantage. Due to the increase in competition in the business market, the competitive advantage has major importance for the

businesses. It is based on the unique strengths of the company. Business which does not have advantage over competitors, cannot get maximum benefit. The comparative advantage could be based on tangible and intangible things. It may be based on the strategies as well as skills of the employees. Generally, competitive advantage makes the business to produce goods along with the services with better quality and low cost. Usually, competitive advantage belongs to the cost leadership differentiation, strategic alliance and defensive strategies which has major importance in any business activity. Therefore, this study also considered competitive advantage in relation to the historical tourism and cultural tourism. Similarly, the competitive position of any business is described as the position based on unique strengths of the business which do not have by the competitors. It is also based on the competitive advantage. The business which has more competitive advantage generally remain in the competitive position in competitive business market.

Historical tourism and cultural tourism have relationship with the competitive advantage and competitive business position in the market. When the people visit various historical places in any country, it is linked with various other services and products. Tourist travel to different parts of the world always require various other services from various other industries as transportation, hotels as well as various other necessities to travel to different places. Therefore, the historical tourism is linked with other industries and it is directly affected on other business activities positivity. Business activity running in any historical places where tourists visit continuously have better competitive advantage. Culture is also important, whenever the tourist from different countries visited the culture, they also required various related services. The business activities in the area of unique culture can have a competitive advantage by facilitating the tourist which come to see the culture and participate in various festivals. The involvement of various services and products for the tourists related to the cultural and historical tourism can promote the business competitive advantage. It can increase competitive advantage which lead to the competitive position in the market as highlighted by previous studies. The competitive advantage has major importance in business success or business performance (Herman, Hady, & Arafah, 2018; Lorenzo, Rubio, & Garcés, 2018; Yi, Amenuvor, & Boateng, 2021). To promote competitive business position, it is important to promote competitive advantage. Therefore, according to the current study cultural tourism and historical tourism has a significant importance for business activities in the concerned area to promote competitive advantage. Therefore, it is also proposed that competitive advantage is playing a mediating role between tourism and competitive business position. Therefore, following hypotheses are proposed by following the above discussion;

Hypothesis 1. Historical tourism has significant relationship with competitive position.

Hypothesis 2. Cultural tourism has significant relationship with competitive position.

Hypothesis 3. Historical tourism has significant relationship with competitive advantage.

Hypothesis 4. Cultural tourism has significant relationship with competitive advantage.

Hypothesis 5. Competitive advantage has significant relationship with competitive position.
Hypothesis 6. Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between historical tourism and competitive position.
Hypothesis 7. Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between cultural tourism and competitive position.

Methodology

The current study is based on the quantitative research approach rather than qualitative research approach as number of studies in relation to the cultural tourism, historical tourism and competitive advantage are based on the quantitative research approach. While applying quantitative research, this study used primary data rather than secondary as the variables namely cultural tourism, historical tourism, competitive advantage and competitive business position can be measure with the help of primary data and there is lack of secondary data on these variables. Therefore, it is not easy to measure these variables with the help of secondary data and this study adopted a cross sectional research design in which a questionnaire is used to collect data from the respondents. The population of this study is based on the business activities working in Thailand in the province of U-don Thani. Only those business activities were considered in this study which were related to the historical tourism and cultural tourism. As the business actively participating in cultural tourism and historical tourism can better explain that how tourism can lead to a competitive advantage and to gain a competitive business position. Therefore, the respondents of the study are based on the owners of business activities. 500 questionnaires were used in this study for data collection and questionnaire was designed based on Likert scale. 500 questionnaires were distributed among the owners of businesses in U-don Thani provinces of Thailand. 270 questionnaires were returned which were used in data analysis to achieve the study objective.

Data Analysis

Table 1 shows the data statistics which indicates that data has no missing value and no outlier. Furthermore, normality of data is also highlighted in Table 1. However, normality of data is not required in Smart PLS. Smart PLS is suitable to analyze data in the condition of non-normality of data.

Table 1
Data Statistics

	No.	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Standard Deviation	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
HT1	1	0	3.245	3	1	7	2.03	-0.519	0.125
HT2	2	0	2.191	3	1	7	1.763	-0.58	1.443
HT3	3	0	3.477	3	1	7	2.011	-0.764	0.323
HT4	4	0	3.432	3	1	7	1.888	-0.777	0.415
HT5	5	0	2.518	3	1	7	1.696	-0.456	1.309
CT1	6	0	3.468	3	1	7	2.092	-0.717	0.248

CT2	7	0	2.468	3	1	7	1.823	-0.94	0.133
CT3	8	0	3.609	4	1	7	1.849	-0.791	1.217
CT4	9	0	3.664	3	1	7	1.8	-0.657	0.329
CT5	10	0	3.591	3	1	7	1.882	-0.675	0.391
CT6	11	0	2.505	3	1	7	2.05	-0.671	0.394
CA1	12	0	3.532	3	1	7	1.8	-0.538	1.369
CA2	13	0	3.559	3	1	7	1.856	-0.74	0.314
CA3	14	0	2.436	3	1	7	2.074	-0.48	0.453
CA4	15	0	3.5	3	1	7	1.91	-0.951	0.213
CA5	16	0	3.418	3	1	7	1.788	-0.623	1.324
CP1	17	0	2.609	3	1	7	1.784	-0.681	0.25
CP2	18	0	3.059	3	1	7	1.49	-0.117	0.621
CP3	19	0	3.173	3	1	7	2.022	0.433	0.894
CP4	20	0	3.232	3	1	7	1.457	0.721	1.904
CP5	21	0	2.141	3	1	7	1.469	0.426	0.768
CP6	22	0	3.077	3	1	7	1.407	0.504	0.699

Data analysis of the study is started with measurement model assessment. Measurement model assessment through Smart PLS is based on the factor loading, composite reliability (CR) from the alpha and average variance extracted (AVE) (Ali, Rasoolimanesh, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Ryu, 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2019). This section is based on the factor loadings majorly. According to the previous studies, the loading of each item must be higher than 0.5 to retain the item. Therefore, this study considered 0.5 as minimum threshold level for loadings. Study addressed composite liability by taking 0.7 as minimum threshold level. AVE is considered by taking 0.5 as minimum threshold level. All the result are given Table 2. Figure 2 shows the measurement model which indicates factor loadings.
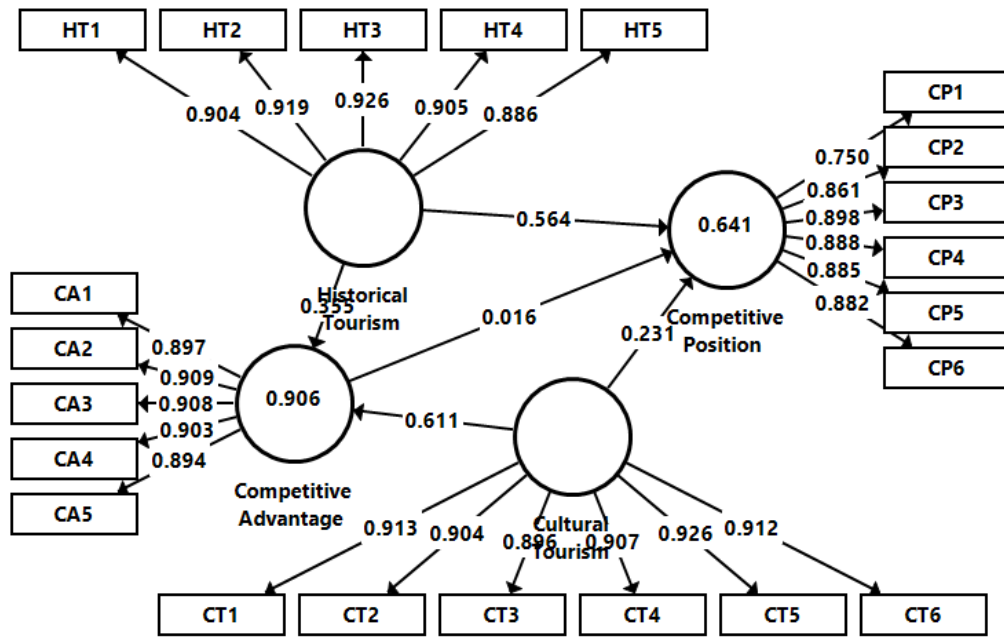
Figure 2. Measurement Model

Table 2 shows the CR values which must be higher than 0.7. It shows that all the CR values for historical tourism, cultural tourism, competitive advantage and competitive business position have achieved the minimum level. Furthermore, the values of AVE are also achieved the minimum level of 0.5. The achievement of CR and AVE, this study confirmed the convergent validity. Discriminant validity is also important to achieve while using Smart PLS (Tan, Abu, & Abdul Rahim, 2018). Therefore, it is achieved with the help of cross-loadings which is given in Table 3.

Table 2
Factor Loadings, CR and AVE

Variables	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Competitive Advantage	CA1	0.897	0.943	0.956	0.814
	CA2	0.909			
	CA3	0.908			
	CA4	0.903			
	CA5	0.894			
Competitive Position	CP1	0.75	0.93	0.945	0.743
	CP2	0.861			
	CP3	0.898			
	CP4	0.888			
	CP5	0.885			
	CP6	0.882			

Cultural Tourism	CT1	0.913	0.958	0.966	0.828
	CT2	0.904			
	CT3	0.896			
	CT4	0.907			
	CT5	0.926			
	CT6	0.912			
Historical Tourism	HT1	0.904	0.947	0.959	0.825
	HT2	0.919			
	HT3	0.926			
	HT4	0.905			
	HT5	0.886			

Table 3
Discriminant Validity

	Competitive Advantage	Competitive Position	Cultural Tourism	Historical Tourism
CA1	0.897	0.702	0.829	0.835
CA2	0.909	0.651	0.849	0.831
CA3	0.908	0.654	0.831	0.828
CA4	0.903	0.696	0.905	0.859
CA5	0.894	0.716	0.843	0.835
CP1	0.746	0.85	0.822	0.822
CP2	0.581	0.861	0.604	0.622
CP3	0.615	0.898	0.642	0.667
CP4	0.587	0.888	0.61	0.633
CP5	0.577	0.885	0.604	0.634
CP6	0.627	0.882	0.655	0.668
CT1	0.836	0.722	0.913	0.862
CT2	0.829	0.711	0.904	0.857
CT3	0.862	0.681	0.896	0.848
CT4	0.89	0.709	0.907	0.838
CT5	0.876	0.715	0.926	0.869
CT6	0.86	0.701	0.912	0.854
HT1	0.843	0.752	0.842	0.904
HT2	0.85	0.69	0.855	0.919
HT3	0.846	0.695	0.846	0.926
HT4	0.833	0.73	0.848	0.905
HT5	0.844	0.746	0.872	0.886

Results of the study are obtained with the help of structural model. Structural model is most important to examine the relationship between variables (Ali et al.,

2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2017; Zaman, Nawaz, Tariq, & Humayoun, 2019), therefore in this study the structural model is used to examine the relationship between cultural tourism, historical tourism, competitive advantage and competitive business position. In this direction t-value was used to check the significance of the relationship in which 1.96 as a minimum criterion of acceptance of hypothesis are considered. Furthermore, beta value is considered to examine the direction of the relationship. Results are given in Table 4 which shows that cultural tourism has significant relationship with competitive advantage. Historical tourism also has significant relationship with competitive advantage. Both historical tourism and cultural tourism has a significant impact to achieve competitive business position. Furthermore, the effect of cultural tourism on competitive advantage is also positive and significant. Similarly, historical tourism has positive influence on competitive advantage. Finally, results of the study shows that competitive advantage has positive role to promote competitive business position.

Table 4
Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Competitive Advantage -> Competitive Position	0.016	0.01	0.004	3.981	0
Cultural Tourism -> Competitive Advantage	0.611	0.606	0.06	10.205	0
Cultural Tourism -> Competitive Position	0.231	0.236	0.117	1.97	0.049
Historical Tourism -> Competitive Advantage	0.355	0.359	0.059	5.991	0
Historical Tourism -> Competitive Position	0.564	0.565	0.151	3.743	0

Furthermore, this study examined the indirect effect of competitive advantage. The indirect effect of competitive advantage is examined between historical tourism and competitive business position. Second indirect effect of competitive advantage is examined between cultural tourism and competitive business position. Both the indirect effects are significant and the results of indirect effect are given in Table 5. Finally, this study examined Predictive Relevance (Q^2) to assess the quality of the model. According to literature, Predictive Relevance (Q^2) must be higher than zero (Hartinah et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2018). It is shown in Table 6.

Table 5
Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Historical Tourism -> Competitive Advantage -> Competitive Position	0.056	0.005	0.015	3.699	0
Cultural Tourism -> Competitive Advantage -> Competitive Position	0.045	0.005	0.012	3.701	0

Table 6
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Competitive Advantage	1100	294.654	0.732
Competitive Position	1320	726.93	0.449
Cultural Tourism	1320	1320	
Historical Tourism	1100	1100	

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study examined the effect of historical tourism and cultural tourism on competitive business position and competitive position of business. Moreover, the mediating role of competitive advantage is also examined. This study proposed five direct effect hypotheses and two indirect effect hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 shows the relationship between historical tourism and competitive business position. The results of this hypothesis are significant which shows that historical tourism has positive effect on competitive business position. It indicates that historical tourism increases the competitive business position in any business setting. The increase in historical tourism activities in any area has positive role to promote competitive business position in that area. The hypothesis 2 shows the effect of cultural tourism on competitive business position which shows that it has positive role in business competitiveness. Cultural tourism also has the ability to promote competitive business position of business activities. More the cultural opportunities in any area can have the potential to provide competitive business position. Therefore, both the historical and cultural tourism has a significant role to achieve competitive business solution. As previous studies reported the significant relationship between tourism and business competitiveness (Kawulur, Mawitjere, & Kawulur, 2021).

Furthermore, the direct effect of historical tourism is examined in relation to the competitive advantage in hypothesis 3, showing that there is a positive effect of historical tourism on competitive advantage. Competitiveness in business can be achieved with the help of providing various services related to the historical tourism which has the ability to enhance business competitiveness. As other studies also highlighted that tourism and competitive advantage has a significant

relationship with each other (Kršlak & Ljevo, 2021; Nashiruddin & Susanti, 2021; Suliman, 2021) which is in line with the current study. Hypothesis 4 shows a direct effect of cultural tourism on competitive advantage. Tourism also has the potential to promote competitive advantage in any specific area of business. Both historical tourism and cultural tourism has the potential to gain competitive advantage. Hypothesis 5 shows the effect of competitive advantage on competitive position. According to the previous studies competitive advantage has significant role to attain competitive position in any business setting (Kwak, Seo, & Mason, 2018; Van den Bosch & Van Prooijen, 1992). Similar with the previous studies, this study also highlighted that competitive advantage has positive effect on competitive business position. It shows that increase in competitive advantage among the companies can increase a competitive business position.

Furthermore, hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7 was proposed to test the mediating effect of competitive advantage. Hypothesis 6 shows the indirect effect of competitive advantage between historical tourism and competitive business position which is significant. It shows that competitive advantage has the ability to highlight the effect of historical tourism on competitive business position. Hypothesis 7 shows that the effect of cultural tourism can be transferred on competitive business position with the help of competitive advantage as this indirect effect is also significant. The results of this study shows that both historical tourism and cultural tourism has the ability to promote competitive business position.

Implications of the Study

The current study is unique in nature because this study examined the role of tourism in various business activities. Although several previous studies considered tourism business activities, these activities are also considered in relation to the tourism business however, literature have not addressed the effect of tourism in various other business setting. Therefore, this study considered tourism activities in relation to the historical tourism and cultural tourism in relation to the competitive business position. Additionally, studies are also available to examine the effect of competitive advantage on competitive position of business, however it is rare that how historical tourism and cultural tourism effect on competitive advantage on various business activities, particularly, in U-don Thani Province, Thailand. Studies have ignored the relationship between comparative business position, competitive advantage. In this direction, this study addressed the area of literature in relation to the business at tourism which has a relationship with competitive position and it has major importance to start other debate that how tourism activities effect on various other business activities. Similarly, this study also examines the mediating role of competitive advantage. This study prove that the competitive advantage is mediating variable between historical tourism and competitive position. It is also observed that competitive advantage has a mediating effect between cultural tourism and competitive position. Therefore, this study also proved competitive advantage as a mediating variable which is never been studied in previous studies. This study is theoretically strong which has application for practice. This study shows that competitive business position in any business can be attained with the help of the involvement of tourism activities. Therefore, companies working in various

business activities should promote and provide various services and products to the tourist which can enhance the competitive business position. According to the historical tourism and cultural tourism it is important to gain competitive position, therefore it is recommended to the business activities to promote historical tourism and cultural tourism products as well as services to gain competitive position. Similarly, the businesses should provide various services related to the historical tourism and cultural tourism to gain a competitive advantage which will automatically lead to the competitive business position in the market. Hence this study has insights for the practitioners to promote competitive business position with help of competitive advantage which can be attained through historical tourism and cultural tourism.

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